DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 779 CS 207 120

AUTHOR Witte, Stephen P.; And Others
TITLE A National Survey of College and University Writing Teachers. Technical Report No. 4.
INSTITUTION Texas Univ., Austin.
SPONS AGENCY Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 31 Jan 82
GRANT G008005896
NOTE 83p.; Prepared through the Writing Program Assessment Project.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Higher Education; *National Surveys; Remedial Instruction; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Background; Teacher Education; Teacher Response; Teaching Load; *Teaching Methods; Two Year Colleges; *Writing Evaluation; *Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of a national survey of a selected group of college and university teachers of writing considered to be the best by the directors of their writing programs. The first chapter explains how the sample of teachers was selected, examines the distribution of the sample across types and sizes of institutions, summarizes the teachers' workload with reference to teaching and other duties, reports on the respondents' preparation as composition teachers, and speculates on the relation of the sample to the national population of college and university writing teachers. The second chapter examines some of the conditions under which writing is taught in American colleges and universities and treats such matters as the types and curricular levels of the writing courses taught, the sizes of the writing classes, and the use of required syllabi. Chapter III examines curricular and instructional practices in college composition classrooms and reports on such things as the amount of actual writing done in different writing courses, how writing is used in those courses, and some specific curricular and instructional activities in different kinds of courses and different types of institutions. The fourth chapter looks at the way teachers evaluate students' performance, focusing primarily on the particular characteristics of students' texts that teachers say most influence their evaluation of them. The fifth chapter quotes teachers about the most successful aspects of their composition teaching, and the final chapter provides an overview of the results of the survey. Appended is a listing of participating institutions. (HOD)

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TECHNICAL REPORT NO. 4
FUND FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
GRANT NO. G008005896

A NATIONAL SURVEY OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY WRITING TEACHERS

Stephen P. Witte and Paul R. Meyer
with Thomas P. Miller
Writing Program Assessment Office
GRG 106-A
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas 78712
January 31, 1982

The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, Department of Education, with supplemental funding from the University of Texas at Austin. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education or The University of Texas.

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE SURVEY

I. 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a national survey of a selected group of the best college and university teachers of writing in the country today. Like our earlier survey of writing program directors (see note 1), the present survey was undertaken to provide the profession at large with reliable and current information about the teaching of writing in this country's colleges and universities, primarily to determine what aspects of writing programs deserve attention in writing program evaluations. Like the earlier report of the writing program directors' survey, this report relies heavily on descriptive statistics, but at the same time tries to remain sensitive to the individual voices of the teachers who provided the information we report in the following pages. Although we had no particular model survey instruments in mind when constructing our questionnaire, our questionnaire was influenced by the earlier work of Albert R. Kitzhaber (see note 2), Elizabeth Cowan (see note 3), Jasper Neel (see note 4), and Claude Gibson (see note 5). We found especially helpful the work of Gibson, for his survey helped us to see the importance of certain areas we might have otherwise overlooked.

The present report covers a number of areas of concern to college teachers of writing as well as to college writing program directors and other college administrators. In the present chapter, we explain how our sample of teachers was selected, examine the distribution of the sample across types and sizes of institutions, summarize the teachers' workload with reference to teaching and other duties, report on the respondents' preparation as composition teachers, and speculate on the relation of our sample to the national population of college and university writing teachers.

Chapter II examines some of the conditions under which writing is taught in American colleges and universities. It treats such matters as the types and curricular levels of the writing courses the responding teachers teach, the sizes of their writing classes, and the use of required syllabi.

Chapter III examines curricular and instructional practices in college composition classrooms. In that chapter we report on such things as the amount of actual writing done in different writing courses, how writing is used in those courses, and some specific curricular and instructional activities in different kinds of courses and different types of institutions.

Chapter IV looks at the way teachers evaluate student performance in writing courses. The chapter focuses primarily on the particular characteristics of student texts that teachers say most influence their evaluation of them.

While the first four chapters rely heavily on descriptive statistics to

summarize teachers' responses to the questionnaire, the penultimate chapter--Chapter V--allows the teachers to speak in their own voices about the most successful aspects of their composition teaching.

We hope that our report will help readers to develop a greater understanding of the teaching of writing in colleges and universities in this country. We also hope that what they find out will aid in the development of methods to evaluate writing courses and programs. The report itself is heavily laden with tables, but the use of numbers and tables seems to us the most economical and precise way of presenting the large amount of data we collected. It also seems to be the most honest way to present them. We might have simply examined the numbers ourselves and offered only our interpretation of those numbers. But, because we are uncertain what some of the data we have collected mean, such a procedure would have eliminated from the report a great deal of potentially valuable information. When we feel confident that a body of data means this or that, we say so; when we are uncertain about the meaning of certain pieces of information, we also say so and invite our readers to offer their own interpretations. We do not think that our not knowing how to interpret a given piece of information is sufficient reason to exclude it from the report: surely, others will succeed where our interpretive powers fail.

Our work on the survey began in September, 1980. From that time until near the end of December we examined the literature on the teaching of writing, hoping to determine the kinds of questions we ought to ask and to estimate how much information we would need to elicit from responding teachers. After much deliberation and many preliminary versions of the questionnaire, we decided on a questionnaire which would elicit a great deal of information on a large number of different questions. Near the end of December, our two first-year consultants--Richard Lloyd-Jones and Richard L. Larson--examined our questionnaire and offered their suggestions for revision. Some of their suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

I. 2. SAMPLE SELECTION

We contacted the writing teachers responding to our questionnaire through the directors of their writing programs. These directors had indicated their own willingness to complete a questionnaire we had designed for a national survey of college writing program directors (see note 6). We had asked these writing program directors to have two of their best teachers of writing complete the questionnaire for the teachers' survey. Using this procedure we were able to collect responses from 181 teachers across the country.

I. 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION

In the present section we examine the distribution of the 181 responding teachers across types and sizes of institutions. We also examine

the teachers' academic degrees, their graduate work in rhetoric-related courses, and their experience in teaching composition. Degrees, academic preparation, and experience are examined for teachers in different types of institutions.

I. 3. 1. Distribution of Responding Teachers Across Types and Sizes of Institutions

We employed three taxonomies used by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as the basis for our categories of types and sizes of institutions. One taxonomy distinguishes among institutions on the basis of primary source of funding (see note 7). Thus in the following sections of this report, we frequently group teachers according to whether they teach in institutions which receive their primary funding from private or public sources. A second NCES taxonomy allowed us to classify institutions as either two-year colleges, four-year institutions, or universities. Under this classification system, only those institutions with professional schools (e.g., medical, dental, law, veterinary medicine) and substantial graduate programs could be classified as universities (see note 8). One effect of our using this latter taxonomy was that some schools called universities are not so classified by us. Although classifying the responding teachers' institutions differently than NCES does would have better reflected the names of some institutions, it would have produced distributions which could not easily be compared to national distributions available only through NCES documents. A third NCES taxonomy allowed us to classify institutions by total enrollment (see note 9). This taxonomy provided for six size categories, ranging from "total enrollment less than 1,001" to "total enrollment greater than 20,000." Reflecting these NCES classification schemes, Tables I.1 through I.4 summarize the distribution of the 181 responding teachers across types and sizes of institutions.

	Private		Public		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
2-Year	2	1.1	16	8.8	18	9.9
4-Year	45	24.8	53	29.3	98	54.1
Universities	22	12.2	43	23.8	65	36.0
TOTAL	69	38.1	112	61.9	181	100.0

Table I.1. Distribution of Responding Teachers by Number and Percentage Across Type of Institution and Principal Source of Funding (N=181).

Institutional Size Categories	Responding Teachers Private N	Private %	Public N	Public %	Total N	Total %
LT 1001	9	5.0	--	---	9	5.0
1001-2500	26	14.3	1	0.6	27	14.9
2501-5000	9	5.0	31	17.1	40	22.1
5001-10000	14	7.7	23	12.7	37	20.4
10001-20000	6	3.3	22	12.2	28	15.5
GT 20000	5	2.8	35	19.3	40	22.1
TOTALS	69	38.1	112	61.9	181	100.0

Table I.2. Distribution of Responding Teachers Across Size of Institution and Source of Funding (N=181).

Institutional Size Categories	2-Year Priv	2-Year Publ	4-Year Priv	4-Year Publ	Univ Priv	Univ Publ	Total
LT 1001	--	--	9	--	--	--	9
1001-2500	2	1	24	--	--	--	27
2501-5000	--	7	9	20	--	4	40
5001-10000	--	6	--	16	14	1	37
10001-20000	--	2	3	9	3	11	28
GT 20000	--	--	--	8	5	27	40
TOTALS	2	16	45	53	22	43	181

Table I.3. Distribution of Responding Teachers Across Size of Institution, Type of Institution, and Source of Funding (N=181).

Institutional Size Categories	2-Year		4-Year		Univ		Total
	%Priv	%Publ	%Priv	%Publ	%Priv	%Publ	%
LT 1001	---	---	5.0	---	---	---	5.0
1001-2500	1.1	0.6	13.2	---	---	---	14.9
2501-5000	---	3.8	5.0	11.1	---	2.2	22.1
5001-10000	---	3.3	---	8.8	7.7	0.6	20.4
10001-20000	---	1.1	1.7	5.0	1.6	6.1	15.5
GT 20000	---	---	---	4.5	2.7	14.9	22.1
TOTALS	1.1	8.8	24.9	29.4	12.0	23.8	100.0

Table I.4. Distribution by Percentage of Responding Teachers Across Size of Institution, Type of Institution, and Source of Funding (N=181).

As Table I.1 indicates, 69 (38.1%) of the responding teachers are from schools which receive their principal support from private sources and 112 (61.9%) are from institutions receiving their principal support from public sources. Eighteen of the teachers (9.9%) are from two-year colleges, both junior colleges and community colleges. Another 98 teachers (54.1% of the sample) come from four-year institutions, and 65 teachers (36.0%) teach in universities. As Table I.3 and Table I.4 show, the difference between the percentages of teachers who work in private and public schools differs considerably for two-year colleges (1.1% compared with 8.8%) and universities (12.2% compared with 23.8%). The difference between the percentages for private and public within four-year institutions is considerably less (24.8% compared with 29.3%) than the percentages for the other two types of institutions. As Tables I.2 through I.4 indicate, a healthy percentage of the teachers come from institutions falling into each of the different size categories except that providing for institutions with total enrollments of "less than 1,001" students. The percentage of responding teachers coming from institutions within the remaining five size categories ranges from about 15% to about 22%. Although we would have liked to have received more responses from teachers in two-year colleges, in private institutions of all types, and in small institutions, we are generally pleased by the distribution of our sample across the various classes represented in Table I.1 through Table I.4.

I. 3. 2. Workload, Training, and Experience of Responding Teachers

The teachers responding to our survey also differed across institutional types with respect to workload, educational levels, and teaching experience.

Workload. Important differences can be seen in teacher workload across

different types of institutions. These differences are summarized in Table I.5. As Table I.5 indicates, we defined workload operationally in terms of four categories—teaching writing courses, teaching nonwriting courses, doing administrative work, and taking graduate-level classes. This fourth category was necessary because several of the responding teachers were graduate students at the institutions where they teach. Workload for each of the four categories is presented in Table I.5 as a "courseload equivalent"; all of the means reported in in Table I.5 are adjusted to accommodate differences between workload under a semester system and workload under a quarter system. In addition, the means are expressed in terms of fulltime equivalent (FTE) faculty.

Institutional Type	N	Writing Courses Taught Per Year	Non-Writing Courses Taught Per Year	Administrative Course Equivalent Per Year	No. of Courses Enrolled In	Total
2-Year	18	6.27	1.92	0.61	0.20	9.00
Priv 4-Year	45	3.66	2.39	0.96	0.38	7.39
Publ 4-Year	53	4.70	2.15	0.56	0.44	7.85
Priv Univ	22	3.32	1.78	1.14	0.50	6.74
Publ Univ	43	3.81	1.30	0.91	0.89	6.91
ALL	181	4.22	1.94	0.82	0.52	7.50

Table I.5. Duties and Responsibilities of Responding Teachers (N=181) Listed as Average Course Load Equivalents Including Summer Courses and Adjusted for Differences Between Semester Teaching and Quarter Teaching.

As Table I.5 shows, the two-year college teachers not only have by far the greatest load of writing courses and the largest total workload, but they also get very little course relief in the form of administrative assignments. For this group of teachers, the average yearly load in writing courses of 6.27 is 38.1% higher than the mean of 4.22 writing courses for all 181 responding teachers; and it is 47% greater than the mean number of writing courses (3.32) taught per year by teachers in private universities, the group which teaches the fewest average number of writing courses each year. The two-year college teachers also teach 25% more writing courses per year than the teachers in four-year public institutions, the group which teaches the next highest average number (4.70) of writing courses per year. Table I.5 also shows that teachers from private institutions consistently teach fewer writing courses, more non-writing courses, and fewer total courses per year than their counterparts in public institutions. The teachers from private institutions also receive substantially more relief from teaching by means of

administrative assignments than do teachers in public institutions. At the university level and perhaps at the level of four-year institutions, the lower administrative workload for teachers in public institutions probably reflects the larger number of graduate teaching assistants employed in those public institutions.

Table I.5 also shows that of the 181 teachers who responded to our survey, those from private four-year institutions teach, on the average, the largest number (2.39) of nonwriting courses--usually literature courses--per year. The average number of nonwriting courses for that group, however, is only 10% higher than the average (2.15) for teachers from public four-year institutions, the group teaching the second highest average number of nonwriting courses per year. Probably because non-tenured instructors or lecturers and graduate teaching assistants are included in our sample, the teachers from public universities teach on the average the fewest (1.30) nonwriting courses per year and are enrolled in the greatest number of graduate classes.

The courseload equivalents for administrative duties vary considerably across instititional types. Teachers from two-year colleges and from public four-year institutions devote the equivalent of about six-tenths of one course to administrative duties each year; and teachers from private four-year institutions and from public universities receive on the average, credit for over nine-tenths of one course for performing administrative duties within their respective institutions. Teachers from private universities devote more of their energies to administrative duties than do any of the other groups of teachers. In private universities, teachers devote, on the average, the equivalent of 1.14 courses per year to administrative duties.

As might be expected--because of the number of graduate students included among the respondents--the teachers from public universities enroll in the largest average number of courses each year. That group takes, on the average, nearly one graduate course per year (mean=0.89). None of the other four groups of responding teachers average more than one-half a graduate course per year; and the teachers from two-year colleges average considerably less than that.

As the last column in Table I.5 indicates, the teachers from two-year colleges have the heaviest workload, on average the equivalent of nine courses per year. Of these nine courses, approximately 70% are writing courses and 21% are nonwriting courses. That means that about 91% of the two-year college teachers' workload is devoted to teaching, while only 9% is devoted to administrative duties and graduate study.

For the teachers from private four-year institutions, the situation is somewhat different. Of their 7.39 average courseload equivalent, only about 49.5% is accounted for by writing classes, while 32.3% is accounted for by nonwriting courses. Thus about 82% of workload of private four-year teachers is devoted to teaching, which is about 10% less than the percentage of workload accounted for by teaching among the two-year college teachers. Of the remaining 18% of their average workload, almost 13% is given over to administrative duties.

The percentage of workload devoted to teaching by public four-year teachers is only slightly higher than that for their private counterparts. Whereas about 82% of the workload of private four-year teachers is accounted for by teaching, teaching accounts for about 87% of the workload of public four-year teachers. This percentage of workload for public four-year teachers is distributed somewhat differently than it is for the private four-year teachers. For the public teachers, 60% of the workload is made up of writing courses and 27.4% made up of nonwriting courses. The remaining 12.5% of the public four-year teachers' workload is fairly evenly distributed across administrative work and graduate study.

The responding teachers from universities, whether private or public, have a lower workload--as we have defined it--than any of the three other groups of teachers, with teachers from private universities having the lightest workload of all responding groups. Their workload is over 25% less than that of two-year college teachers. The workload of public university teachers is about 23% less than that of two-year college teachers. For teachers from private universities, about 49.3% of their 6.74 courseload-equivalent average is given over to teaching writing courses and about 26.5% to teaching nonwriting courses. Almost 17%—the highest of any of the five groups--of the workload of private university teachers is devoted to carrying out administrative duties, and 7.4% is committed to graduate study. Among the teachers from public universities, nearly 74% of the workload is devoted to teaching, with about 55% devoted to the teaching of composition and about 19% devoted to teaching noncomposition courses. The remaining 26% of the workload of teachers from public universities is about evenly distributed across administrative duties and taking graduate courses.

These figures may suggest to some that the teachers in our sample are progressively better off in terms of workload as one moves through Table I.5 from two-year colleges to universities. And in one sense such a view is justified, for quite clearly the two-year college teachers have a heavier workload, as we have defined it, than their counterparts from either four-year institutions or universities; and just as clearly, teachers from four-year institutions have a heavier workload—again, as we defined it—than teachers from universities. Unfortunately, we failed to include on our questionnaire any questions which would help us determine how much of the teachers' workload is devoted to doing original research or to supervising the research of graduate students. At many universities, the normal per-semester or per-quarter teaching load is less than it is in four-year institutions or two-year colleges because faculty in universities are expected to conduct and publish original research and to supervise independent graduate study to a degree not expected by two-year colleges and four-year institutions. To the extent that doing research and supervising graduate students' research is preferable to teaching a larger number of courses, university faculty "have it easy" by comparison to their counterparts from two-year colleges and four-year institutions.

Education. Besides wanting to know about writing teachers' workloads, we also wanted to know about their teaching backgrounds, specifically their education and experience. To find out about their educational backgrounds, we asked two questions, one about the highest degree the teachers had earned and

a second about the amount of graduate work completed in "rhetoric-related" courses.

Table I.6 presents the results of our survey of highest degrees earned.

Degree Type	2-Year Schools	4-Year Schools	Universities	All Schools
BA	--	3	--	3 (1.7%)
MS	--	3	1	4 (2.3%)
MA	10	33	18	61 (35.5%)
MFA	7	7	6	20 (11.6%)
PhD	1	38	31	70 (40.7%)
EdD	--	6	--	6 (3.5%)
DA	--	1	--	1 (0.6%)
Other	--	4	3	7 (4.1%)
TOTAL	18 (10.5)	95 (55.2)	59 (34.3)	

Table I.6. Numbers of Responding Teachers (N=172) Holding Degrees of Different Types.

As Table I.6 indicates, 172 teachers provided information about the highest degree they hold. Of the 172 respondents, 70 (40.7%) have a Ph.D. and 61 (35.5%) have an M.A. By pooling the number of teachers holding similar degrees, we find that 85 (49.4%) of the responding 172 teachers have master's degrees of some type, and 77 (44.8%) hold doctorates of some type. The majority of the two-year college teachers (55.6%) hold an M.A. Of the teachers from four-year institutions, 33 (34.7%) have an M.A. and 38 (40.0%) have a Ph.D. Only six of the teachers in our sample hold an Ed.D., and all six teach in four-year institutions. Only one of the 172 teachers holds a Doctorate of Arts (DA), and that teacher is from a four-year institution. The highest relative percentage of responding teachers holding the Ph.D. occurs, not unexpectedly, in universities. Thirty-one (52.5%) of the 59 university teachers in our sample have a Ph.D. The next largest group among the university teachers is that of teachers with an M.A., with 18 (30.5%) of the university teachers falling into that group. Most of those are either graduate students taking coursework at the institutions where they are employed as teachers or instructors hired year-to-year or semester-to-semester.

We also asked teachers to indicate how much graduate work they had completed in "rhetoric-related" courses. In eliciting responses to this question, we provided the teachers with a smorgasboard of courses related to rhetoric and the teaching of writing. None of the courses we listed were specifically literature courses. Several teachers--most of whom did not indicate that they had completed very many courses of the types we listed--criticized us for not including literature courses on the list. The reason for this omission was that we believed all teachers responding to our survey

would have strong literature backgrounds. What we wished to determine was if a sizeable number of our responding teachers had developed expertise in other courses of study. And we found that 56.3% of the 166 teachers who supplied information about their graduate coursework had, in fact, completed at least one graduate-level "rhetoric-related" course. The results of this aspect of our survey are summarized in Table I.7.

Graduate Course	2-Year (N=16)	4-Year Priv (N=40)	4-Year Publ (N=51)	Univ Priv (N=16)	Univ Publ (N=43)	All (N=166)
General Linguistics	4	20	22	6	14	66
Meth. of Teaching College Writing	5	12	23	6	12	58
Contemporary Rhetorical Theory	2	5	11	5	12	35
Critical Theory/Hermeneutics	1	9	11	3	10	34
Educ. Psychology	3	7	17	1	6	34
Classical Rhetorical Theory	2	10	8	4	8	32
Research in Written Composition	1	7	15	1	5	29
Meth. of Teaching Elem. & Secondary Writing	1	5	13	1	3	23
Socio-Linguistics	1	5	8	2	2	18
Meth. of Teaching Reading	--	--	12	1	3	16
Theories of Reading	--	1	11	--	3	15
Psycho-Linguistics	--	3	8	1	2	14
Cognitive Psychology	1	2	9	--	2	14
Research in Reading	1	1	5	--	2	9

Table I.7. Numbers of Responding Teachers (N=166) By Institutional Type Who Received Graduate Credit for Various Rhetoric-Related Courses.

Table I.7 distributes the responses of the 166 responding teachers across institutional types according to the different rhetoric-related courses listed in our smorgasboard of such courses. Table I.7 indicates that the type of course most frequently taken was one in general linguistics. Of the 166 teachers, 66 (39.8%) had taken at least one such course during their graduate education. Of teachers from the various types of institutions who had taken the course, the percentages are larger for teachers in four-year institutions, with 20 (50.0%) of the 40 teachers in private four-year institutions and 22 (43.1%) of 51 in public four-year institutions having taken such a course. The lowest relative number for this course is among two-year college teachers

where only four (25%) of the 16 teachers had taken such a course, followed by the 14 (32.6%) of the 43 public university teachers.

The next most frequently taken course is "methods of teaching college writing." Of the 166 respondents, 34.9% completed such a course. Of the teachers in various types of institutions, more from public four-year schools took the course than from any other group. Of the 51 teachers from such schools, 23 (45.1%) indicated that they had completed such a course as part of their graduate work. The lowest relative number of teachers who had completed such a course appears in public universities, where only 12 (27.9%) of the 43 teachers indicated that such a course had been part of their graduate educations.

The third most frequently completed course was one in "contemporary rhetorical theory." That course represents, however, a distant third. Only 35 (21.1%) of the 166 teachers indicated that they had completed such a course. Of those 35 teachers, five teach in private universities (representing 31.3% of the teachers in that group), 12 teach in public universities (representing 27.9% of that group), and 11 teach in public four-year schools (representing 21.6% of that group).

Two courses tied for fourth place among the most frequently completed graduate courses, a course in "critical theory or hermeneutics" and a course in "educational psychology." Of the 166 responding teachers, 34 (20.5%) indicated that they had completed one or the other or both of these two courses. For the course in "critical theory and hermeneutics," about the same percentage of teachers from private and public four-year schools and from private and public universities indicated they had completed such a course during their graduate careers. The percentages of teachers were not so evenly distributed for the course in "educational psychology": 33.3% of the teachers in public four-year institutions indicated they had completed such a course; the next highest percentage (17.5%) was for the seven teachers from private four-year institutions.

Thirty-two of the 166 teachers indicated they had completed at least one course in "classical rhetorical theory." The highest percentages of teachers having taken such courses are in private four-year schools (10 of 40 or 25%) and in private universities (4 of 16 or 25%). At least one course in "research in written composition" had been completed by 29 (17.5%) of the 166 teachers; 15 of those 29 are from four-year public institutions, representing 29.4% of that group. Other courses listed in Table I.7 but not mentioned above were completed by increasingly fewer of the responding teachers. However, it should be pointed out that teachers from public four-year schools account for the bulk of the teachers who had completed any of those remaining courses.

Table I.8 presents an overview of the findings summarized in Table I.7.

	2-Year (N=16)	4-Year Priv (N=40)	4-Year Publ (N=51)	Univ Priv (N=16)	Univ Publ (N=43)	All (N=166)
Number of Teachers Who Completed at Least One Graduate Level Rhetoric-Related Course	9	23	33	8	22	100
Percent of Teachers Who Completed at Least One Graduate Level Rhetoric-Related Course	56.3	57.5	74.5	50.0	51.2	60.2
Average Number of Graduate Hours Completed in Rhetoric-Related Courses	10.0	10.4	20.9	11.6	11.9	14.1

Table I.8. An Overview of the Graduate Training in Rhetoric-Related Courses of the Responding Teachers (N=166) by Type of Institution.

Of the 166 teachers who supplied information about the rhetoric-related graduate courses they had completed, 100 or 60.2% had completed at least one such course. The 166 responding teachers averaged 14.1 semester credit-hours in such graduate courses, indicating that many of the 100 teachers who are listed as having taken at least one such course had actually completed more than one. The most striking piece of information in Table I.8 is that teachers of writing in public four-year institutions had completed, on the average, about twice as many "rhetoric-related" courses as teachers from any other type of institution. Of the 51 responding teachers from those institutions, 38 or 74.5% indicated they had completed at least one graduate "rhetoric-related" course. These 51 teachers averaged 20.9 graduate credit-hours in "rhetoric-related" courses, the highest average for any group of responding teachers. This suggests that the educational backgrounds of the best writing teachers in public four-year institutions differs significantly from the backgrounds of teachers in other types of institutions; the educational backgrounds of teachers from public four-year institutions may provide them with a kind of expertise which makes them particularly well-prepared for teaching writing at the college level. The lowest percentage of teachers of any group to complete at least one rhetoric-related graduate course is for teachers in private universities, followed closely by the percentage for teachers in public universities. The lowest average number of

graduate credit-hours for any group is the one for two-year college teachers. Those teachers averaged only 10 graduate credits in "rhetoric-related" courses. However, since only one of the responding two-year college teachers holds a Ph.D., one would assume that fewer opportunities in formal graduate education existed for that group. The same may be said for the graduate students included among the best teachers in the other types of institutions.

Generally speaking, Tables I.7 and I.8 suggest that the responding teachers from four-year institutions are perhaps the best prepared for teaching college-level composition. This assumes, of course, that one's graduate education has some bearing on his/her performance as a teacher. Perhaps this is an assumption that some readers would not be willing to grant.

Teaching Experience. Another factor which may be related to effective teaching is years of experience. It is interesting that in our sample of the best teachers of writing there was much variation in experience within individual institutions but little difference across institutions. Table I.9 demonstrates this latter finding: teachers from each and every institutional type averaged essentially between ten and twelve years of teaching experience. However, within institutions the range in experience was apt to be from virtually none to forty or more years of experience. The average standard deviation of over seven years indicates that there is a good spread in teaching experience across our sample.

Teacher Group	Number of Responding Teachers	Mean No. of Years Teaching	Standard Deviation
Two-Year	17	11.2	5.8
Priv Four-Year	43	12.3	7.8
Publ Four-Year	51	11.9	7.4
Priv Univ	20	10.6	8.1
Publ Univ	28	9.9	6.7
ALL	169	11.3	7.3

Table I.9. Amount of Teaching Experience for the Five Groups of Responding Teachers (N=169).

As Table I.9 shows, teachers from private four-year institutions had the most experience on the average. However, the variance for that group is the second largest of all five types of institutions, indicating that within that group considerable variation in experience exists. The greatest variation appears within the class of teachers from private universities, the class with the next to the lowest average for number of years teaching. The class of teachers with the lowest average number of years of teaching experience is that of public universities, a phenomenon which is probably attributable to the larger number of graduate teaching assistants included within that category. The smallest standard deviation, and hence the most uniformity in teaching experience, exists for teachers from two-year colleges. This can probably be attributed to the smaller number of graduate students teaching in two-year colleges.

I. 4. RELATIONSHIP OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION TO THE NATIONAL POPULATION OF COLLEGE WRITING TEACHERS

We would like to be able to give our readers a sense of how representative our sample of college writing teachers is, but several things make doing so difficult. For one thing, we requested that our questionnaire be given only to the very best writing teachers at any particular institution. To the extent that our sample population consists of only the best teachers, it is not representative of the "average" college composition teacher in the country. But since we wanted to consult these teachers about the nature of good composition teaching, we wanted our responding teachers to be better than "average." While our sample is thus intentionally nonrepresentative of all college and university writing teachers, we may be able to talk about how representative our sample is of the best teachers of college writing. In addition, there is a second difficulty, one centered on what we mean by representative. We could, for example, compare the institutions of our responding teachers to all institutions in the country, focusing on such demographics as the size of schools in terms of student enrollment, level of funding, ratio of faculty to students, etc. In fact, this kind of comparison appears in Table I.10, which reflects categories derived from NCES sources. But this table shows only how representative our sample institutions are of all collegiate institutions nationwide rather than how representative our sample teachers are of all teachers (or even of the best teachers). Because the different types of institutions differ systematically in size(e. g., two-year colleges are generally smaller than universities and private institutions are generally smaller than public ones), a sample that is numerically represenative of schools will have a different distribution than a sample that is numerically representative of teachers. The difference between these two ways of being representative is analogous to the way the Senate and House of Representatives are representative of states and population, respectively.

	National Distribution for 1978-79		Our Sample	
	% Priv	% Publ	% Priv	% Publ
2-Year	8.6	29.5	1.1	8.8
4-Year	42.3	14.5	24.9	29.3
Univ	2.1	3.0	12.2	23.8
TOTAL	53.0	47.0	38.2	61.9

Table I.10. Comparison of the Distribution of Schools Represented in Our Sample with the National Distribution of Schools for 1978-1979.

As Table I.10 suggests, our sample population is about as

representative of institutions across the country as the U.S. Senate is representative of the population of the 50 states. Two-year colleges, public and private, and four-year private institutions are underrepresented in our sample; and four-year public institutions and universities, both public and private, are overrepresented. Representation is the poorest for two-year colleges and universities. This is not, however, too surprising. Universities are generally larger than other institutions and generally employ a larger number of writing teachers per institution than do two-year institutions, and public institutions tend to be larger than private ones. Thus--as Table I.10 suggests--our sample is more representative of teachers than it is of institutions.

How representative our sample of teachers is of college teachers of writing in general is difficult to estimate, however. To make such an estimate, we need to know how many college teachers of writing there are nationally and how they are distributed across the different types of institutions. Unfortunately, the National Center for Education Statistics provides little help on this matter, so we have had to rely on a more indirect and less precise method.

We are fortunate in having a fairly good estimate of the average number of writing courses taught each year per teacher by type of institution across the country, an estimation derived from our previous survey of writing program directors. If we assume that the teaching load of the teachers responding to our survey is representative of the teaching load of other writing teachers in the same institutions (an assumption which is, of course, itself a possible source of error), then we can divide the average number of writing courses taught per teacher in different types of institutions by the average number of writing courses taught by teachers in different types of institutions. This division yields estimates of the national distribution of writing teachers by institutional type. These estimates appear in Table I.11.

	Average No. of Writing Sections per Institutional Type*	Average No. of Writing Sections per Teacher per Institutional Type	Estimate of Average No. of Writing Teachers per Institution
2-Year	94.8	6.27	15.1
Priv 4-Year	32.8	3.66	9.0
Publ 4-Year	84.7	4.70	18.0
Priv Univ	101.2	3.32	30.5
Publ Univ	249.8	3.81	65.6

Table I.11. A National Projection of the Number of Writing Sections Taught Annually per Type of Institution and per Teacher and the Number of Writing Teachers per Type of Institution (*see note 10).

Table I.12 transforms the figures presented in Table I.10 and Table I.11 into a national projection of writing teachers by percentage across the various types of institutions and compares those projections with the distribution of our sample of responding teachers.

	Projected National Distribution of Writing Teachers in Percentage Across Types of Institutions	Our Sample Distribution in Percentage Across Types of Institutions
2-Year	30.2	9.9
Priv 4-Year	20.1	24.9
Publ 4-Year	36.0	29.3
Priv Univ	3.3	12.1
Publ Univ	10.4	23.8
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Table I.12. Projected National Distribution of College Writing Teachers Compared with Distribution of Present Sample of Writing Teachers.

Table I.12 indicates that although our sample is not representative of the national distribution of writing teachers by institutional type, it is more representative of writing teachers than it is of institutions. Nevertheless, Table I.12 indicates that teachers from two-year colleges are underrepresented in our sample and that teachers from universities are overrepresented. But the relative percentages are closer for teachers than they are for types of institutions.

While this section on national projections may suggest to some that our survey is of little value because it is not representative of either the national distribution of institutions or the national distribution of college writing teachers, two points need to be made. First, it should be pointed out that prior to the present survey of teachers, we had no way of knowing what a representative population of college writing teachers would look like. At least now the profession has some guidelines for conducting a representative survey of college teachers according to a workable classification system. Second, our intention was not to conduct a survey representative of college and university writing teachers in this country. Our concern was to survey only the best writing teachers in this country's colleges and universities.

CHAPTER II

CONSTRAINTS ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING

II. 1. INTRODUCTION

In the teaching of writing, teachers operate under a large number of constraints, some imposed by the institution and some created by social and political factors beyond the institution itself. In the present chapter, we focus on three constraints that may affect the way a teacher teaches but over which the teacher has little or no control. In particular, we examine (1) the academic levels of students enrolled in the writing courses taught by the responding teachers, (2) the sizes of the composition classes taught, and (3) the extent to which the responding teachers were required to rely on a standard syllabus to structure their teaching. Many of the questions we asked on these topics were not designed to answer specific questions but rather to give us a better idea of what questions need asking.

II. 2. THE ACADEMIC LEVELS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN WRITING COURSES

The academic levels of the students enrolled in composition courses of various types and offered at various academic levels can place constraints on how those courses are taught. For example, if a writing course is designed for beginning college freshmen, certain assumptions are usually made about what the students know and can do when they enter the course; and the curriculum taught and the instructional methods used are typically geared toward students with "freshman-level" abilities and knowledge. If students possessing more advanced skills and greater general knowledge subscribe to such a course, then teachers may have to adjust either curriculum or instruction to accommodate those advanced students. Similarly, if a writing course designed for upper-division students attracts freshmen and sophomores not prepared for the course, the teacher may have to adjust content and teaching methods to handle both groups of students. In this sense the level of students enrolling in a writing class is a constraint over which the teacher usually has no control.

Although we did not collect information about the kinds of adjustments teachers make to accommodate the needs of students whose abilities and knowledge are either above or below the academic level of various types of writing courses or about the effects of such enrollment patterns on teacher and course evaluations, we did collect information about the extent to which students of different academic levels enroll in writing courses. The results of these analyses appear in Table II.1.

Course Type	N of Teachers	Students Per Class: Avg. N of Fresh.	Avg. N of Soph.	Avg. N of Upper-Division
Developmental/ Remedial	49	16.8	1.0	0.5
Freshman (1st Semester)	138	21.6	1.2	0.3
Freshman (2nd Semester)	83	20.1	1.7	0.5
Freshman (3rd Semester)	13	19.0	3.9	0.5
Sophomore	5	2.2	11.4	2.3
Creative	7	3.5	6.4	3.8
Adv. Expository	37	4.1	3.8	9.4
Technical	13	8.6	2.8	9.6
Business	11	8.8	4.4	10.4
"Other"	24	6.5	4.5	9.0

Table II.2. The Average Number of Students at Three Academic Levels Enrolled in the Various Types of Writing Courses Taught by the Responding Teachers.

As Table II.2 shows, students at all three academic levels enroll in all ten types of writing courses for which we received information about the academic levels of students.

Within the set of four freshman-level courses, the average number of sophomore enrollees increases as one moves from developmental or remedial writing courses to third-semester or -quarter courses. In fact, in this latter freshman writing course, nearly 20% of the students on the average are not freshmen; and in the second-semester freshman composition course, over 10% of the students are either sophomores or upper-division students.

Two courses--sophomore composition and creative writing--seem typically to be offered at the sophomore level. Across the country nearly 15% of students taking courses characterized as sophomore expository writing are freshmen and nearly 15% are upper-division students. In the sophomore-level creative writing course, nearly 26% and 28% of the students are either freshman or upper-division students, respectively. These data probably indicate that creative writing courses are taught at different levels in different institutions and that individual courses are open to students at different levels.

An interesting question raised by these data is whether some of the students taking courses designed for an academic level different from their own are either overprepared or underprepared for the demands of the course. Having students with widely differing abilities and levels of development can be a liability for the writing teacher, perhaps forcing the teacher to employ a variety of instructional strategies that he or she would not have to employ if the students were all of the same academic level.

The potential constraints on teaching generated by the academic levels of students may be greatest for upper-division courses. Our data seems to suggest that upper-division writing courses are generally open to lower-division students. In advanced expository writing courses, nearly 24% of the enrollees are freshman and nearly 22% are sophomores. Whether these figures result because many advanced expository writing courses are set at freshman and sophomore levels or whether they suggest that advanced expository writing classes tend to be made up of students from several different academic levels is not clear. However, if the latter is the case more often than the former, then the problem of dealing with writers of varying abilities and experience may be widespread.

Table II.2 seems to suggest that technical writing courses and business writing courses are taken either by freshmen or juniors. This is somewhat misleading because the figures reported in Table II.2 include responses from teachers in two-year colleges where such courses are often offered only at the freshman level. Nevertheless, even among the four-year institutions and universities, over 40% of the students in these upper-division courses are either freshmen or sophomores.

II. 3. COMPOSITION CLASS SIZES

The number of students enrolled in a composition class is another important constraint on teaching. It seems likely that the amount of time a teacher can devote to a particular student and the amount of writing required of that student decrease in proportion to the number of students in a given class. Class size also influences the effectiveness of the instructional methods and activities the teacher employs. For example, if teachers elect to devote some portion of class time to discussing assigned readings, students in larger classes may be less inclined to participate than students in smaller classes. In addition, in larger classes teachers may be less willing to use such instructional techniques as workshopping or conferencing because of the lower probability of giving students immediate feedback on their writing.

We have virtually no information about the specific ways in which class size affects writing instruction among the teachers who responded to our survey, though we, like many others, generally subscribe to the notion that fewer students per class results in better teaching. We present our findings with the hope that others will see fit to investigate the possible relationships between composition course class size and instructional effectiveness. Our findings are summarized in Table II.3

Course Type	N of Teachers	N of Sections	Avg. Class Size
Developmental	49	103	18.3
Freshman (1st Semester)	138	315	23.1
Freshman (2nd Semester)	83	178	22.9
Freshman (3rd Semester)	13	30	23.4
Sophomore	5	11	15.9
Adv. Expository	37	63	17.3
Technical	13	26	21.0
Business	11	19	23.6
Creative	7	13	13.7
"Other"	24	36	20.0
TOTALS	378	797	21.5

Table II.3. Average Number of Students Enrolled in Composition Classes Taught by the Responding Teachers.

Table II.3 can be divided into four sections: freshman writing courses (the first four courses listed), nonfreshman writing courses (the next five courses listed), "other" writing courses (a category of miscellaneous courses we will not discuss), and all courses (respresented by "TOTALS").

The 797 writing classes taught by the teachers responding to our survey have an average class size of 21.5 students. We find it encouraging that of the four freshman courses, developmental classes enroll the fewest average number of students, 18.3. Although an even smaller number is probably desirable, this average suggests that the institutions represented by the 49 responding teachers who teach this course recognize that teaching writing to developmental students makes more and different demands on teachers than teaching writing to nondevelopmental students. Compared with other freshman composition classes, developmental classes are on the average 20.8% smaller than first-semester classes, 20.1% smaller than second-semester classes, and 21.8% smaller than third-semester/-quarter classes. The average class sizes of these other three freshman courses differ, at most, by only 0.5 students. This small difference suggests that either the responding teachers or their institutions or both do not consider class size in nondevelopmental freshman courses as important as in developmental courses.

Greater variation in average class size obtains for the five nonfreshman courses listed in Table II.3. The range among these courses is from 13.7 students in creative writing classes to 23.6 in business writing classes, a range which might suggest that the special demands of more advanced

writing courses are accommodated by lower enrollment ceilings than those typically used for nondevelopmental freshman writing courses. Within this range in average class size, we see that the nonfreshman course having the largest average class size, business writing, enrolls on the average nearly 42% more students per class than the nonfreshman course with the smallest average class size, creative writing. Of the five courses in this group, all except business writing have smaller classes on the average than the three nondevelopmental freshman writing courses; and three of the five--sophomore composition, advanced expository writing, and creative writing--have smaller average class sizes than freshman developmental writing courses. Creative writing courses, which often enroll students who see themselves as good writers already, have an average class size that is 25.1% smaller than that for developmental writing courses, courses which enroll the poorest students.

The smaller class sizes of nonfreshman courses may result from institutional decisions. It may be that institutions see the teaching of advanced writing courses as involving greater demands on teachers than do courses at the freshman level, that institutions simply cannot afford the luxury of smaller classes in freshman courses (which, as reported in our survey of writing program directors, account for 86.15% of all college writing courses taught in this country; see note 11), or that freshmen deserve less attention in their writing courses than do advanced students.

II. 4. REQUIRED USE OF COMMON SYLLABI

Just as the distribution of students of different academic levels in writing classes and the average size of composition classes are important constraints that may affect the teaching of writing, so too may be requiring the use of common course syllabi. The effects of such a requirement can be many, and they can be either positive or negative, depending on the particular course, program, and institution involved. One effect of requiring teachers to follow a common syllabus may be a clearer understanding, on the part of students and teachers, of the specific goals and objectives of the course. Another effect may be that students exiting from a course with a common syllabus will do so with a common set of skills and abilities, thus allowing teachers and administrators to plan more easily the nature of subsequent courses.

While the required use of common syllabi may affect a course or program positively, it may also affect the course or program negatively. Some teachers, for example, complain that common syllabi are often restrictive, forcing them to teach material that they consider unimportant or uninteresting, to use instructional methods with which they are not comfortable, to espouse theories in which they place little confidence. Other teachers see the required use of common syllabi as a threat to academic freedom, as it may indeed be in some cases.

Whatever their virtues and their vices, common syllabi are often required in composition programs. Our intent in this section is not to weigh the pros and cons of requiring teachers to use common syllabi in their writing

courses. Our only intent is to provide a general indication of how widespread the required use of common syllabi is in freshman and nonfreshman writing courses, for the use of common syllabi may indicate something of the internal consistency of writing programs. Our findings appear in Table II.4

Course Level and Institutional Type	N of Teachers	% of Teachers Required to Follow a Course Syllabus
Freshman Level		
Two-Year	18	44
Priv Four-Year	45	40
Publ Four-Year	53	49
Priv University	22	23
Publ University	43	40
TOTALS	181	41
Upper-Division Level		
Two-Year	6	17
Priv Four-Year	22	23
Publ Four-Year	22	7
Priv University	12	17
Publ University	29	10
TOTALS	91	15

Table II.4. Percentage of Responding Teachers Required to Follow Course Syllabi in Freshman and Upper-Division Writing Courses.

Table II.4 shows that between 40% and 49% of two-year colleges, private and public four-year institutions, and public universities require their teachers to use common syllabi in freshman-level writing courses. As Table II.4 also shows, only 23% of the teachers of freshman writing courses in private universities are required to follow a common syllabus. This may indicate that departments in private universities exert substantially less influence over their writing teachers than do departments in other types of institutions. Of the five classes of teachers, a larger percentage of public four-year teachers are required to use common syllabi than teachers in any of the other classes.

We find it interesting that the teachers in four-year public institutions represent the faculty group with the greatest amount of formal training in rhetoric and composition, both with respect to the average number of credits earned and with respect to the average number of faculty who have completed at least one rhetoric-related graduate course (see Table I.8 above). In contrast, private universities have the smallest percentage of teachers who

have completed at least one graduate rhetoric-related course, as we have broadly defined "rhetoric-related" (see again Table I.8 above). We would not conclude from this that in all cases the teachers least prepared to teach writing receive the least guidance and are the most free to determine course content and teaching methods, but the data clearly suggest that there is a substantial difference in administrative procedure and teaching philosophy between private universities and public four-year colleges.

Table II.4 also shows that, as might be expected, the percentages of institutions requiring the use of common syllabi in upper-division courses are considerably smaller than those for the required use in freshman courses. These lower percentages are not unexpected, for a number of reasons. First, larger percentages of upper-division writing courses are taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty than of freshman courses, as we learned from our previous survey of writing program directors (see note 12). Second, the smaller percentages probably reflect the fact that fewer sections or classes are typically offered of upper-division courses than of freshman courses, perhaps allowing whatever coordination is needed among teachers of upper-division courses to take place on a more or less informal basis. Third, the lower percentages may reflect a more pluralistic view of the teaching of writing at the upper-division level.

CHAPTER III

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY WRITING COURSES

III. 1. INTRODUCTION

The present chapter focuses on several aspects of teaching composition. In this chapter we examine both curricular and instructional aspects of writing courses, although we have found it impossible to maintain rigorous distinctions between the two. The four major sections which follow tend to focus both on what is taught in composition courses and on how composition is taught. We leave fine distinctions between what and how, between curriculum and instruction, to our able readers.

In the section immediately following the present one, we report on the amount of writing required in composition courses of various types, an aspect of writing course which touches on both curricular and instructional matters.

In the third section, we examine the uses of writing in the composition courses taught in five different types of institutions. For this third section, we adapted to our own purposes the taxonomy Arthur Applebee employed in his recent study of writing in secondary schools (see note 13). We are concerned in this chapter with the kinds of writing students are expected and taught to write. In particular, we focus on what we call mechanical, persuasive and informative, expressive, and creative uses of writing.

The fourth section examines curricular activities used in the teaching of writing. We refer to these activities as curricular rather than instructional activities because, though they combine curriculum and instruction, they seem to us to denote what-is-taught rather than how-it-is--taught. In other words, these activities seem to reflect the content that teachers teach. In some cases, the content requires students to learn bodies of knowledge; in other cases, it requires students to learn how to use processes associated with writing. This fourth section contains three subsections--one each devoted to curricular activities employed in developmental freshman, nondevelopmental freshman, and nonfreshman writing courses.

In the fifth and final section, we report on the percentage of teachers' time given over to different types of instruction. Obviously, the emphasis in the fifth section is on instruction rather than curriculum, on how teachers choose to teach writing courses rather than on what they teach in them.

From the sections included in the present chapter, we hope will emerge a better and clearer--even if imperfect--picture of both curricular and instructional concerns in the teaching of writing in colleges and universities

in this country.

III. 2. AMOUNT OF WRITING IN DIFFERENT COURSES

Many composition specialists and teachers of writing have argued that nothing teaches writing so well as the act of writing itself; and it is our assumption that students who are not required to write in their composition classes are not likely to improve their writing skills. However, as far as we know, the literature on composition provides no reliable evidence that this or that amount of writing will produce better student writers at the college level than some other amount.

In our survey of the best writing teachers, we attempted to determine how much writing of original texts is done in different types of writing courses. In this section we report both the average number of pages in original texts as well as the standard deviations for ten kinds of writing courses plus a category of "other" writing courses.

The standard deviations are generally quite large, indicating that even among the best composition teachers there is considerable difference in the amount of writing assigned. We can't really tell how much this variation is due to the teachers' own beliefs about the optimal amount of writing that should be done or how much is due to institutional constraints beyond the teachers' control.

The amount of variance in the responses is one reason for interpreting the present results cautiously. Another reason is that the teachers used three different units of measure in responding to our question. Some responded in terms of the total number of "papers," some in terms of the total number of "pages," and some in terms of the total number of "words" written per course. We converted all teachers' responses into numbers of pages, assuming as did the survey question that there are about 150 words per handwritten page. When we were not fairly sure which unit a particular teacher's response was couched in, we excluded that teacher's answer from analysis. Even so, we can not be sure that this procedure did not change the distribution of responses. A third reason for exercising caution in interpreting our findings is that the number of classes which represent certain types of courses is quite small: although generalizing from observations of six or nine is not uncommon in some composition research, doing so is extremely dangerous.

With these cautions stated, we summarize our findings in Table III.1.

Type of Course	N	Avg. No. of Pages per Semester	S.D.
Freshman Developmental			
Introductory (Non-Credit)	16	25.7	19.5
Remedial/Developmental Writing (Credit)	37	36.5	21.1
Freshman Nondevelopmental			
Introductory Expository	141	43.1	28.5
Introduction to Literature & Critical Writing	36	32.9	20.2
Composition: Special Topics	9	49.4	47.1
Advanced			
Vocational/Technical Writing	7	46.7	28.9
Advanced Expository Writing	40	46.8	25.3
Business Writing	6	35.0	15.6
Technical Writing	9	43.1	24.1
Creative Writing	9	58.9	31.0

Table III.1. Average Number of Pages Written in Composition Courses of Different Types.

For purposes of discussion, the courses listed in Table III.1 can be divided into three groups: developmental courses, nondevelopmental freshman courses, and advanced courses. While these divisions work for the vast majority of the the classes represented in Table III.1, it should be noted that in four instances, business writing courses, technical writing courses, and creative writing courses are taught at the freshman level. We justify including such courses among advanced courses because they seem to have less in common with freshman courses than with advanced courses. In addition to the reports on the classes represented in Table III.1, we received reports on 18 writing classes which fell into none of the categories specified.

The average amount of writing required in the two developmental courses differ not unexpectedly: students enrolled in credit-bearing developmental courses write more than students enrolled in developmental courses for which no credit is granted. Students in the former type of course are required to write, on the average, 10.8 or 30% more pages than students in noncredit

developmental classes. In fact, of all the courses listed in Table III.1, the least amount of original writing occurs in noncredit developmental courses. This is not a surprising finding since many of the students enrolled in such courses have had no or little previous experience doing writing of any kind.

Within the set of three freshman writing courses, the most writing occurs not in introductory expository writing courses as might be expected but in composition courses focusing on special topics, such as technology and American society, the roles of men and women, or art history. Students in such special topics courses write on the average about 13% more pages than their counterparts in freshman expository writing courses. Of the three freshman-level writing courses, those titled "literature and critical writing" require the least amount of writing. Students in these courses write on the average about 25% fewer pages than students in freshman expository writing courses and nearly 44% fewer pages than students enrolled in special topics courses at the freshman level. Of all the courses listed in Table III.1, only noncredit developmental courses require less writing from students than courses focusing on literature and critical writing.

Six of the courses listed in Table III.1 are advanced courses. Of these courses, creative writing courses require the largest average amount of writing from their students, while business writing courses require the smallest average amount. The average number of pages written in these two types of courses seems to complement the average number of students enrolled in them, as reported in Table II.3 in the previous chapter. Creative writing, the advanced course with the smallest average number of students, requires the largest average number of pages, while business writing, the advanced course with the largest average number of students, requires the smallest average number of pages. Only students in noncredit developmental writing courses and in literature and critical writing courses produce less original writing than do students in business writing courses; and no students write more than students in creative writing courses.

The largest number of advanced classes represented in Table III.1--and perhaps the only advanced class with a large enough number of responses to allow generalizations--come under the heading of advanced expository writing courses. Students in these 40 classes write, on the average, 46.8 pages. This figure represents only 8% more writing than is required from students in introductory expository writing courses at the freshman level, the course category with 141 classes and thus best represented in our sample.

Our discussion of Table III.1 has centered almost exclusively on the means or averages reported for the various courses. Perhaps even more important for an understanding of the data presented in this section is the variablity in responses indicated by the standard deviations. The amount of writing required in similarly titled writing courses taught by different teachers in different types of institutions varies so much that it almost does not make sense to talk about an "average" amount of writing for a particular course.

Consider, for example, the courses most frequently offered--introductory freshman expository writing, advanced expository writing,

literature and critical writing, and credit-bearing developmental writing courses. Teachers of the most frequently offered course, introductory expository writing at the freshman level, require 43.1 pages, on the average, from their students. But the standard deviation of 28.5 pages indicates that the actual numbers of pages reported by the teachers cover quite a range. Going back to the original data, we found that for introductory expository writing there was a practical minimum of about 20 pages required. About 13% of the teachers said they required 20 pages, but only 5% said they required fewer than 20 pages. At the other end of the spectrum, almost 15% of the teachers of introductory expository writing required over 60 pages from their students.

The standard deviations in the amount of writing required in the other courses listed in Table III.1 are equally large. This indicates that, as was the case for introductory expository writing, the amounts of writing reported by the teachers vary considerably. For those courses, too, there is a little conformity among teachers concerning the amount of writing appropriate for such courses.

The point of this focus on the standard deviations reported in Table III.1 is, of course, that means or averages by themselves are at least misleading, leveling out important differences within a given sample population. We believe that the amount of variability in the amount of writing required in classes of a particular type is as important as the average. When viewed together with the standard deviations, however, the means do yield fairly good descriptions of the various sample populations reported in Table III.1.

We also looked at the amount of writing teachers require of students in introductory freshman composition courses in different types of institutions. These data are presented in Table III.2.

Type of Institution	N	Avg. No. of Pages per Semester	S.D.
Two-year	13	30.9	9.8
Private Four-year	36	51.3	38.2
Public Four-year	42	41.9	28.3
Private University	17	38.8	17.5
Public University	33	44.0	23.1
ALL	141	43.1	28.5

Table III.2. Average Number of Pages Written in Introductory Expository Writing Courses in Different Types of Institutions.

Table III.2 demonstrates the variability of responses both within and across institutions. Teachers in private four-year colleges require the most writing in their introductory composition courses, over 50 pages per semester. Teachers in two-year colleges require the least, only about 30 pages. This suggests that what happens in the two-year college course may be quite different from what happens in the private university.

Table III.2 also shows how much diversity there is within institutional type. The amount of writing required by teachers of introductory expository writing varies considerably within institutional type. Only teachers from two-year colleges showed a modest amount of agreement. Even their responses had a standard deviation of about ten pages. Responses from all the other groups of teachers varied even more widely. For example, the standard deviation for private four-year colleges, where teachers require an average of about 50 pages from their students, is almost 40 pages. This shows that individual teachers in private four-year colleges require vastly different amounts of writing from their students. In fact, a review of the original data shows that although the average amount of writing required by those teachers is 51.3 pages, almost 45% of the teachers said they require only 30 pages or fewer and 17% said they require 60 pages or more.

The variation in the responses of teachers from other institutional types is comparable to that for teachers from private four-year colleges. As a result, talking about the amount of writing required by teachers from different institutional types in terms of "averages" may be misleading. Since we only surveyed at most two teachers per institution, we cannot be sure of high variability in amount of writing per course within individual institutions, but we suspect that it may be nearly as high as that across

institutions. In any case, the data raise the question of how much control writing programs actually have over the amount of writing done in their courses.

III. 3. TYPES OF WRITING IN WRITING COURSES

Perhaps as important as the amount of writing done in composition courses are the types or uses of the writing students do. The various types of writing in composition classes may reflect both curricular and instructional matters. Some types of writing may be taught systematically; others may simply be used to determine how much students know about a topic or to help them learn about their topic. In the present section, we focus on four general categories of use which we adapted from Applebee's survey of writing in secondary schools: (1) mechanical, (2) informational and persuasive, (3) expressive, and (4) creative or imaginative. For each of the general categories we list a number of specific uses of writing that fall under that category. For example, under "Persuasive & Informative Uses of Writing" in Table III.4 we list "presenting information," "proving a thesis," "exploring a problem," "persuading audiences," and "other persuasive & informative uses of writing."

We were not able to find out how much students write in each of the uses, only how many teachers require at least some writing in those uses. While we would like to have collected information on the uses of writing in composition courses of various types, we were not able to do so. Thus the information presented in this section is pooled across different types of writing courses. That is to say, the nature of our data precluded making distinctions between, say, the uses of writing in developmental classes and advanced expository writing classes. Such distinctions, howver, should be explored.

Another problem with the results presented in this section is that the meaning of some of the categories listed under the four "uses" of writing is ambiguous, making interpretation all the more difficult. For example, we have only a general idea of what the responding teachers had in mind when they indicated whether they required students to "express" themselves in writing.

The percentages of teachers from different types of institutions who require different uses of writing in their writing courses are summarized in Table III.3 through Table III.6.

Mechanical Uses of Writing	2-Yr (N=17)	Priv 4-Yr (N=44)	Publ 4-Yr (N=48)	Priv Univ (N=21)	Publ Univ (N=37)	All (N=167)
Multiple-choice examinations	5.9	15.9	6.3	19.0	10.8	11.4
Fill-in-the-blank exercises	5.9	18.2	10.4	19.0	8.1	12.6
Short-answer exercises	29.4	40.9	22.9	47.6	27.0	32.3
Copying/transcribing	5.9	9.1	4.2	14.3	8.1	7.8
Taking dictation	5.9	11.4	2.1	----	2.7	4.8
Translating	----	----	4.2	----	----	1.2
Notetaking	11.8	29.5	20.8	19.0	24.3	22.8
Other "mechanical uses"	5.9	22.7	16.7	23.8	10.8	16.8

Table III.3. Percentage of Responding Teachers Requiring Different "Mechanical Uses of Writing" in Composition Courses (N=167).

Persuasive & Informative Uses of Writing	2-Yr (N=17)	Priv 4-Yr (N=44)	Publ 4-Yr (N=48)	Priv Univ (N=21)	Publ Univ (N=37)	All (N=167)
Presenting information	82.4	77.3	62.5	71.4	67.6	70.7
Proving a thesis	64.7	84.1	68.8	90.5	78.4	77.2
Exploring a problem	70.6	72.7	64.6	71.4	64.9	68.3
Persuading audiences	70.6	65.9	64.6	76.2	70.3	68.3
Other persuasive & informatives uses of writing	58.8	54.5	52.1	47.6	45.9	49.1

Table III.4. Percentage of Responding Teachers Requiring Persuasive & Informative "Uses of Writing" in Their Composition Courses (N=167).

Personal & Expressive Uses of Writing	2-Yr (N=17)	Priv 4-Yr (N=44)	Publ 4-Yr (N=48)	Priv Univ (N=21)	Publ Univ (N=37)	All (N=167)
Expressing oneself	47.1	45.5	45.8	38.1	54.1	46.7
Writing in journals/ diaries	11.8	31.8	27.1	28.6	37.8	29.3
Writing personal letters/notes	11.8	18.2	16.7	4.8	21.6	16.2
Other personal/expressive "use of Writing"	17.6	22.7	18.8	23.8	16.2	19.8

Table III.5. Percentage of Responding Teachers Requiring Personal & Expressive "Uses of Writing" in Their Composition Courses (N=167).

Creative Uses of Writing	2-Yr (N=17)	Priv 4-Yr (N=44)	Publ 4-Yr (N=48)	Priv Univ (N=21)	Publ Univ (N=37)	All (N=167)
Writing stories	17.6	18.2	16.7	9.5	13.8	15.0
Writing poems	23.5	15.9	12.5	4.8	----	10.8
Writing plays	5.9	2.3	4.2	4.8	----	3.0
Other creative "uses of writing"	----	15.9	14.6	14.3	27.0	16.2

Table III.6. Percentage of Responding Teachers Requiring Creative "Uses of Writing" in Their Composition Courses (N=167).

Of the four general categories into which the uses of writing are classified and presented in Tables III.3 through III.6, the most important is clearly "Persuasive & Informative Uses." Of the particular uses of writing that fall under this general category, the most often required is "proving a thesis," which is required by 77.2% of the 167 responding teachers. The second most often required is "presenting information," which is required by 70.7% of the teachers. Only slightly fewer teachers (68.3%) in all institutions require students to use writing to "explore a problem" or to "persuade audiences."

The highest percentage of teachers within institutional type to require students to use writing to "prove a thesis" occurs in private universities,

with 90.5% of the teachers having this requirement. The next highest percentage is for teachers in private four-year institutions, with 84.1% of the teachers requiring this use of writing. Using writing to "present information" is required by a higher percentage of teachers (82.4%) in two-year colleges than in any other type of institution, and fewer teachers (62.5%) in public four-year institutions require this use than do teachers in any other type of school.

The percentage of teachers in different types of institutions requiring their students to use writing to "explore a problem" varies only slightly, ranging from 64.6% in public four-year institutions to 72.7% in private four-year institutions. Nevertheless, 68.3% of the 167 responding teachers require this use of writing, the same percentage which requires students to use writing to "persuade audiences." However, for this latter category, differences across types of institutions are somewhat larger, ranging from 64.6% in public four-year institutions to 76.2% in private universities.

Of the four general categories represented in Tables III.3 through III.6 above, "Expressive & Personal Uses of Writing" is second in importance, ranking after "Persuasive & Informative Uses." Within this general category, using writing to "express oneself" is required by the largest percentage (46.7%) of the 167 responding teachers. Expressive use of writing is most often required by teachers in public universities (by 54.1% of the teachers) and least often by teachers in private universities (by 38.1% of the teachers). The second most frequently required "expressive" use is "writing in journals/diaries." Of the 167 responding teachers, 29.3% require this "expressive" use. Journal or diary writing is required most by teachers in public universities (37.8%) and least by teachers in two-year colleges (11.8%).

Of the two remaining major uses of writing--the mechanical and the creative--the mechanical uses seem the most important in college composition classes. As Table III.3 indicates, the mechanical uses of writing seem to be more important in private four-year institutions and private universities than in the other three types of schools. Of all the mechanical uses of writing, "short-answer exercises" are required by the largest percentage of responding teachers (32.3%). "Short-answer exercises" are required by 47.6% and 40.9% of the responding teachers from private four-year institutions and universities, respectively, compared with 29.4% of the two-year college teachers, the group with the next highest percentage. Two other mechanical uses ("multiple-choice examinations" and "fill-in-the-blank exercises") also appear to be more important in these two types of private institutions than they are in the remaining three types of institutions. "Copying/transcribing" appears to be most important in private universities, and "taking dictation" seems most important in private four-year institutions. Of all the mechanical uses of writing listed in Table III.3, "notetaking" is second in occurrence, being required by 22.8% of the 167 responding teachers. This mechanical use of writing was cited most often by teachers from private four-year institutions (29.5%) and least often by teachers from two-year colleges (11.8%).

Creative or imaginative uses of writing apparently do not figure importantly in college writing classes, with only 15% of the 167 responding

teachers requiring their students to "write stories" and only 10.8% requiring them to "write poems," the two types of creative writing most often cited. About the same percentage of teachers from two-year colleges and private and public four-year schools require their students to write stories. Of the teachers from the five types of institutions, a higher percentage from two-year institutions (23.5%) require their students to write poems than do teachers from any other type of school.

Table III.3 through Table III.6, although they are somewhat difficult to interpret in very specific ways, do indicate that the major emphasis in teaching writing centers on informative and persuasive uses of writing. This heavy emphasis on informative and persuasive uses may reflect a commitment to prepare students to produce texts for other academic courses in which they will enroll during their educational careers and a commitment to prepare students to write the types of texts they will probably have to write after they leave college and enter the world of work. Although we have no evidence from the data we collected that these two commitments underlie the required uses of writing, these conclusions appear to us to be at least possible and reasonable.

There are a few patterns that seem to hold true across different institutional types. Teachers in private institutions, as described above, tend to put the most emphasis on mechanical uses of writing. They tend to employ multiple-choice exams, fill-in-the-blank exercises, and short-answer exercises considerably more often than teachers in public institutions. Another generalization that cuts across types of institutions is that teachers in four-year colleges--both public and private--seem to spend more time on creative writing than do teachers in universities. In themselves these findings may not mean much, but coupled with other evidence they may help build a picture of composition teaching in different types of institutions.

III. 4. CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN WRITING COURSES

This section of our report examines curricular activities which the responding teachers use in three different types of composition courses: remedial/developmental writing courses; nondevelopmental freshman courses; and nonfreshman courses. To gather these data, we presented the teachers with a list of 40 different curricular activities and asked them to indicate how often they used these activities in their courses. The teachers indicated the frequency of use along a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5. By circling "1," a teacher indicated that the particular activity was "not used at all." A "2" indicated that the activity was "rarely" used, a "3" that it was used "occasionally," a "4" that it was used "often," and a "5" that it was used "very often." Teachers were asked to respond for both the first, second, and third semesters/quarters for the writing courses they taught during the previous academic year. However, because a very limited number of teachers provided information about third semester/quarter courses, we have chosen to focus on only the two earlier courses.

For both semesters' courses, we calculated an average response between

"1" and "5" for the teachers responding. We also calculated the variance for each activity in each course for each of the two semesters. The variance gives an indication of the amount of variability in the sample with respect to the responses for a given curricular activity.

For the sake of brevity, we report only on those curricular activities for which means of 3.00 or greater were calculated. A mean of 3.00 would indicate "occasional" use. In the three following tables we have ranked-ordered the activities according to the frequency of use in first-semester courses, with the most frequently used activites appearing first. The means and the variances for second-semester courses appear in the two right-hand columns of the tables presented in the following sections.

III. 4. 1. Remedial/Developmental Writing Courses

The most frequently used curricular activities in remedial/developmental courses during both the first and second semesters are presented in Table III.7.

Curricular Activity	1st Semester Mean	1st Semester Var	2nd Semester Mean	2nd Semester Var
Discussing topic/thesis statements	4.26	0.71	4.13	0.85
Doing revising/editing of students' papers	4.17	0.90	4.50	0.64
Discussing paragraph development	4.13	0.78	4.13	0.66
Discussing methods of revising/editing	4.11	0.74	4.32	0.80
Discussing paragraph organization	4.11	0.79	4.09	0.72
Discussing mechanics	3.98	0.91	3.87	0.57
Discussing essay organization	3.96	1.30	4.26	0.57
Discussing essay development	3.88	1.33	4.23	0.57
Doing prewriting	3.82	1.14	3.96	0.86
Doing in-class essay writing	3.72	0.94	3.95	0.85
Discussing invention/prewriting/brainstorming	3.68	1.15	3.86	0.70
Having students read and comment on one another's writing	3.55	1.25	4.13	0.76
Having teacher analyze students' writing orally	3.52	1.46	3.57	1.44
Teaching standard usage	3.50	1.82	3.41	1.30
Analyzing audiences for writing	3.14	1.12	3.57	0.66
Doing sentence-combining exercises	3.09	1.63	3.05	1.28

Table III.7. Frequency of Curricular Activities in First-Semester (N=53) and Second-Semester (N=23) Remedial/Developmental Writing Courses.

Table III.7 indicates that "discussing topic/thesis statements" is the most frequently occurring curricular activity in first-semester remedial/developmental courses, while "doing revising/editing of students' papers" is the most frequently used curricular activity in second-semester courses. Of the 16 curricular activities used more than "occasionally" in first- and second-semester remedial/developmental courses, "doing sentence-combining activities" occurs the least often. Three activities--"discussing essay development," "having students read and comment on one another's writing," and "analyzing audiences for writing"--seem to be considerably more

important in second-semester courses than they are in first-semester courses, while the reported means would seem to suggest that the 13 remaining curricular activities are used about as often during the first semester as during the second.

It should be noted that nine of 16 curricular activities listed for the first-semester remedial/developmental courses have variances larger than one, indicating that many teachers use those activities "rarely" or "not at all" while many use them either "often" or "very often." It is also interesting to note that the variances listed for the second-semester developmental courses are usually smaller than those reported for first-semester courses and that only three of those activities have variances greater than one. Together these two observations suggest that teachers of second-semester developmental courses are perhaps more in agreement about the kinds of curricular activities that should be used than are teachers of first-semester courses.

III. 4. 2. Nonremedial/Nondevelopmental Freshman Writing Courses

The results of our survey of curricular activities in first- and second-semester nonremedial/nondevelopmental freshman classes appear in Table III.8. In the present section we simply refer to these courses as "freshman writing courses."

Curricular Activities	1st Semester Mean	1st Semester Var.	2nd Semester Mean	2nd Semester Var.
Discussing essay development	4.37	0.69	4.26	0.76
Discussing essay organization	4.33	0.62	4.21	0.83
Discussing methods of revising/editing	4.18	0.80	4.12	0.74
Discussing topic/thesis statements	4.17	0.97	4.04	1.15
Doing revising/editing	4.06	0.94	4.07	1.14
Discussing paragraph development	3.99	0.74	3.74	1.11
Discussing paragraph organization	3.91	0.83	3.63	1.32
Having students read and comment on one another's writing	3.68	1.44	3.67	1.62
Discussing invention/prewriting/brainstorming	3.63	1.34	3.35	1.61
Analyzing audiences for writing	3.44	0.90	3.48	1.08
Doing prewriting	3.38	1.58	3.13	1.67
Doing in-class essay writing	3.25	1.08	3.05	1.18
Having teacher analyze students' writing orally	3.24	1.24	3.25	1.19
Discussing mechanics	3.22	0.89	2.91	0.83
Discussing rhetorical theory	3.18	1.59	3.09	1.63
Teaching standard usage	3.11	1.44	3.15	1.49
Developing library skills	2.63	1.61	3.27	2.01

Table III.8. Frequency of Curricular Activities in First-Semester (N=126) and Second-Semester (N=93) Freshman Writing Courses.

Table III.8 lists 17 curricular activities, all of which are used more than "occasionally" in either first- or second-semester freshman writing courses. The most frequently used activities are identical for the first and second semesters, and the rank orders for the two semesters for these five activities are nearly identical. Only five of the 17 activities are used more frequently in second-semester courses than in first-semester courses; and the use of only one of those five activities--"developing" library skills"--is appreciably greater than its use in first-semester courses. The respective variances for "developing library skills" are, however, considerably different--1.61 in first-semester courses and 2.01 in second-semester. These large variances suggest that many teachers consider teaching "library skills" an important aspect of freshman writing and that just as many do not.

The variances reported for the two semesters suggest a couple of important differences. Of the 17 curricular activities, eight have variances in excess of one for the first-semester courses, while 13 of the 17 have variances in excess of one for the second-semester courses. In addition, most of the variances for the 17 activities increase from the first to the second semester. In fact, only three of the activities have smaller variances for the second-semester courses than they have for the first-semester courses. These differences in the variances suggest that teachers are perhaps more in agreement about how to teach first-semester freshman courses than they are about how to teach second-semester courses.

It is instructive to compare the activities listed in Table III.8 with those listed in Table III.7 for remedial/developmental courses. Only "doing sentence-combining exercises" appears in Table III.7 but not in Table III.8. Of the 17 curricular activities listed in Table III.8 for nondevelopmental freshman courses, only two do not appear in Table III.7 for developmental courses--"discussing rhetorical theory" and "developing library skills."

Remedial/developmental and regular freshman courses are similar in emphasizing revision and editing skills, but the remedial/developmental courses emphasize basic essay concepts and paragraph-level skills much more than the regular freshman courses. Remedial/developmental teachers gave "discussing topic/thesis statements" their highest average rating, whereas teachers in regular freshman courses rated it fourth. They gave "discussing paragraph development" their third highest rating, whereas the teachers of regular courses rated it sixth. Teachers of remedial/developmental classes gave "discussing paragraph organization" their fifth highest rating, whereas teachers of regular classes rated it seventh. In addition, teachers of remedial/developmental courses gave "discussing mechanics" their sixth highest rating, whereas teachers of regular freshman composition classes rated it fourteenth. As these examples show, remedial/developmental teachers concentrate much more on paragraph-level and grammatical skills than do teachers of regular composition.

Teachers of regular, nonremedial/nondevelopmental freshman courses, on the other hand, focused more on essay level skills. They gave "discussing essay development" their highest rating, whereas the remedial/developmental teachers rated it seventh. They gave "discussing essay organization" their second highest rating, whereas teachers in remedial/developmental courses rated it eighth. Thus it appears that curricular activities differ in systematic ways across levels of writing courses. This is an important finding for those working on methods of evaluating writing courses.

III. 4. 3. Nonfreshman Writing Courses

Our survey of the frequency of curricular activities in nonfreshman writing courses is reported in Table III.9.

Curricular Activities	1st Semester Mean	1st Semester Var.	2nd Semester Mean	2nd Semester Var.
Discussing methods of revising/editing	4.22	0.59	4.32	0.80
Doing revising/editing	4.14	1.04	4.46	0.93
Discussing essay organization	3.98	1.41	4.05	1.09
Discussing essay development	3.98	1.37	4.09	1.04
Analyzing audiences for writing	3.96	1.06	3.86	1.53
Having students read and comment on one another's writing	3.80	1.58	3.86	1.54
Discussing topic/thesis statements	3.57	1.50	3.62	1.25
Discussing paragraph organization	3.57	1.00	3.38	1.55
Discussing paragraph development	3.54	1.02	3.57	1.66
Having teacher analyzing students' writing orally	3.46	1.32	3.38	1.35
Discussing invention/prewriting/brainstorming	3.35	1.51	3.77	1.71
Doing prewriting	3.17	1.61	3.73	2.02
Discussing rhetorical theory	3.00	1.79	2.70	2.02

Table III.9. Frequency of Curricular Activities in First-Semester (N=47) and Second-Semester (N=21) Nonfreshman Writing Courses.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Table III.9 is that of the 13 activities reported as being used more than "occasionally" in first- and second-semester nonfreshman writing courses, only one for the first-semester courses and only two for the second-semester courses have variances smaller than one. This suggests that there is a lot of variability in the kinds of activities that occur in these classes.

It is instructive to compare the curricular activities in nonfreshman writing classes with those in remedial/developmental and regular freshman classes. In remedial/developmental courses the main emphases are sentence and paragraph level skills and revision. In regular freshman writing courses the emphases are essay-level skills and revision. In the nonfreshman courses the emphasis is even more heavily on revision with "discussing methods of revising/editing" ranking first as opposed to third for regular freshman and second for remedial/developmental courses, "doing revising/editing" ranking second as opposed to fifth for regular freshman and fourth for remedial/developmental courses, and "having students read and comment on one

another's writing" ranking sixth as oppposed to eighth for regular freshman and twelfth for remedial/developmental courses. In these nonfreshman writing courses, essay-level skills are slightly deemphasized but still important with "discussing essay organization" ranking third in nonfreshman as opposed to second in regular freshman classes and "discussing essay development" ranking fourth in nonfreshman as opposed to first in regular freshman classes. In the nonfreshman writing courses, "analysing audiences for writing" ranks fifth, whereas it ranks tenth in regular freshman classes and fifteenth in remedial/developmental classes. This may suggest that more complex essay level skills are taught in these courses.

Overall, Tables III.7 through III.9 suggest that while remedial/developmental, freshman, and nonfreshman courses try to teach similar paragraph-level, essay-level, and revision skills, there is a reasonable progression in complexity and sophistication of curricular activities from remedial/developmental courses to regular freshman courses to nonfreshman writing courses. This progression probably corresponds to the developing abilities of the college writer.

III. 5. TIME TEACHERS DEVOTE TO VARIOUS TYPES OF INSTRUCTION

One important aspect of teaching practices is how much use teachers make of different instructional methods. Thus unlike the previous section where we took a predominantly curricular view of teaching practice, in the present section we focus exclusively on instruction.

The data we report in the present section derive from responses to an item on our questionnaire asking teachers to indicate what percentage of their teaching time is given over to different instructional methods. These data are summarized by institutional type in Table III.10.

Type of Instruction	% of Teachers' Time in Different Institutions					
	2-Year	Priv 4-Yr	Publ 4-Yr	Priv Univ	Publ Univ	All
Large-Group Discussions	22.1	22.9	23.7	37.8	32.3	27.1
Lectures	21.5	16.7	14.1	12.2	14.8	15.5
In-Class Essay Writing	10.7	10.3	12.7	6.3	9.7	10.4
Small-Group Discussions	6.6	6.5	12.1	9.4	12.5	10.0
Individual Tutorials	19.2	11.7	8.6	9.0	5.5	9.8
Out-of-Class Conferencing	7.5	9.6	11.5	7.8	7.4	9.2
Classroom Exercises	5.1	5.8	5.8	2.8	6.3	5.5
Other In-Class Writing	1.9	7.1	5.7	7.4	4.0	5.4
Peer-Tutoring	3.2	4.1	2.6	2.9	3.7	3.3
Examinations	1.8	3.6	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.5
In-Class Reading	0.3	1.6	0.9	2.3	0.9	1.2
Computer-Assisted Instruction	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1

Table III.10. Percentage of Teachers' Time Engaged in Different Types of Instruction (N=166).

As Table III.10 indicates, the most frequently used type of instruction across all institutions is "large-group discussions," with 27.1% of the teaching time of all responding teachers given over to this method. Of the teachers from the five types of institutions, those from universities devote more of their teaching time to this method than any of the three remaining groups. In private universities, 37.8% of the teachers' time is spent conducting "large-group discussions," and in public universities, 32.3% is spent this way. From 10 to 15% less teaching time is so spent in two-year colleges and in four-year institutions.

Giving "lectures" takes up the next greatest amount of teaching time among teachers from all institutions collectively. Of all teaching time, 15.5% is spent giving lectures, with the percentage of time in two-year colleges using this instructional type being somewhat higher than that for the other institutions.

"In-class essay writing" accounts for the third highest percentage of teaching time. The lowest percentage for this method of instruction occurs in

...iversity teaching.

Ten percent of all teaching time is given over to conducting "small-group discussions." More time in public four-year schools and universities is devoted to leading "small-group discussions" than in the other three types of institutions.

"Individual tutorials" account for 9.8% of all teaching time, the fifth highest percentage. Time devoted to such tutorials is highest in two-year colleges (19.2%) and lowest in public universities (5.5%).

"Out-of-class conferencing" accounts for an additional 9.2% of all instructional time. The highest percentage of time devoted to "conferencing" is in public four-year institutions, followed closely by private four-year schools.

The remaining types of instruction each account for 5.5% or less of all teaching time in the five types of institutions collectively.

CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCES ON TEACHERS' EVALUATIONS OF STUDENT WRITING

IV. 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important and unique jobs of writing teachers is marking and evaluating student papers. If there is ever to be a thorough way of evaluating the performance of teachers in writing courses, it will have to include a way of assessing both marking and paper grading. In the present chapter, the emphasis is on the kinds of text features teachers think influence them when they grade papers. The following section describes our method of eliciting this information and our results.

IV. 2. EVALUATING STUDENT WRITING

We tried to elicit from teachers in our survey a response indicating what they looked for when they evaluated a student paper. To do this we derived a 52-item questionnaire of cues that might influence a teacher's grading of a paper, cues which we identified through interviews with a number of writing teachers. Responding teachers were asked to rate the influence of each of these 52 cues on a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("very much influence") to 5 ("no influence"). The teachers' responses are presented in a series of eight tables. Tables IV.1 through IV.3 make comparisons among the responses of teachers from different types of institutions. Tables IV.4 through IV.8 summarize the responses of teachers from each type of institution.

In Tables IV.1 through IV.3 we express the teachers' responses in terms of rank orders rather than in terms of the mean ratings the teachers gave to each item. Thus, "appropriateness of essay to writing topic," the cue judged most important by teachers from two-year colleges with a mean rating of 1.78 (see Table IV.4), was ranked first for those teachers, while "support for major ideas" and "quality of ideas," both with the next lowest mean rating, namely 1.89, tied for the second rank. Cues judged by the teachers to have less importance in influencing their grading of student papers (those with higher mean ratings) were given correspondingly higher rankings until all fifty-two cues had been ranked for each type of institution.

We decided to present the information in this way in order to normalize the responses by institutional type and to allow a more reasonable comparison of the results across institutional type. For example, when comparing the way teachers from two-year colleges and teachers from public universities viewed the cue "support for major ideas," it seemed to be more telling that teachers from two-year colleges ranked "support for major ideas" second and teachers

from public universities ranked it first than that teachers from two-year colleges gave it a mean rating of 1.89 compared to 1.97 for teachers from public universities. Both statements are equally true, and to allow anyone interested in seeing the ratings rather than the rankings to do so, Tables IV.4 through IV.8 are provided.

Table IV.1, which shows the 14 cues reported to have the most influence on the evaluation of student papers, is interesting both for what it says about the way teachers think they evaluate student writing and for what it says about the way teachers from different types of institutions think they evaluate student writing. Cues listed in Table IV.1 have mean ratings at or below 2.5 on the 5-point scale, indicating that the teachers believe that these cues are the most important ones of the 52 in evaluating student writing.

Cue	Rank for 2-YR (N=18)	Rank for PRI 4-YR (N=45)	Rank for PUB 4-YR (N=51)	Rank for PRI UNIV (N=20)	Rank for PUB UNIV (N=40)	Rank for ALL (N=174)
support for major ideas	2*	1	2*	1	1	1
coherence	11	2	1	6*	8	2
grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension	4	6	7*	4*	3*	3*
paragraph organization or structure	5*	3	5*	2	9*	3*
unity of topic	5*	7	2*	3	11*	5
logical reasoning	5*	5	7*	9	3*	6
appropriateness of essay to writing assigrment	1	11*	5*	4*	3*	7
quality of ideas	2*	11*	4	6*	6	8
thesis statements	8*	4	9*	12*	9*	9
level of abstraction/ specificity	14*	17	9*	15*	2	10
effectiveness of introductory section	17*	9*	11	10	14*	11
accuracy of information	13	24	12	6*	11*	12
methods of development	28	16	15	12*	16	13*
syntactic "fluency"	19*	14*	14	22*	17	13*

Table IV.1. Most Important Cues for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Ranked by All Teachers. (Ties within institutions are indicated by asterisks.)

As Table IV.1 shows, the consensus among teachers from all institutions is that "support for major ideas" is the cue that influences them most when they evaluate student papers. In fact, our system of ranking responses

indicated that "support for major ideas" is considered either most important or second most important by teachers from all five types of institutions. That one out of fifty-two possible cues would so consistently be judged important suggests that there is more agreement among teachers regarding the evaluation of student papers than might be expected. On the other hand, the teachers' ratings of "support for major ideas" show a fairly high variance (see Tables IV.4 through IV.8). This indicates that within institutional type there is some disagreement concerning the importance of the cue.

The cue that teachers judge second most influential overall is "coherence," which is considered especially important by teachers from four-year institutions. "Coherence" varies quite a bit in importance across institutional type. Teachers from public four-year institutions consider it the most important cue; teachers from two-year colleges, on the other hand, consider ten other cues more important than "coherence" in influencing their evaluation of student papers.

When we ranked the teachers' responses in terms of mean ratings, "grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension" tied with "paragraph organization or structure" as the third most important cue. "Grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension" is considered one of the most important cues by teachers from all institutional types, though teachers from private and public four-year institutions consider the cue of somewhat less important than did their counterparts in two-year institutions and universities. The amount of variation in responses to this cue ranges from moderate to large; the most variance, the most disagreement over the importance of "grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension," occurs among teachers from private universities (see Table IV.7).

"Paragraph organization or structure," the other cue tied for third in overall importance, has average ratings which place it somewhere between second and fifth most important for all teachers, except those from public universities.

These four cues have been singled out for discussion because they are the ones teachers indicated most influence their evaluation of student papers. The other cues listed in Table IV.1 were judged important as well, but they will not be discussed individually.

Differences between types of institutions are also evident in Table IV.1. The teachers in two-year colleges, for example, are unique in their views of the importance of the cues. They ascribe disproportionately more importance to "appropriateness of essay to writing assignment" and "quality of ideas" and disproportionately less importance to "coherence" than do teachers in other institutions. The net rankings of cues for teachers from two-year colleges are sufficiently different from those of teachers from other institutional types to suggest that teachers of writing in two-year colleges have a substantially different approach to evaluating student papers than their colleagues in four-year colleges and universities. However, the ambiguity in such phrases as "appropriateness of essay to writing assignment" makes it difficult to pin down the nature of that difference.

Teachers from four-year colleges and universities generally gave similar ratings for the cues, indicating some agreement in their beliefs concerning the relative influence the cues have on their evaluation of student writing. Still, some systematic differences seem to exist. Teachers from four-year institutions seem to think that "grammatical errors" have less relative influence on their grading of papers and "thesis statements" more influence than do teachers from universities. Teachers from public institutions tend to place more value on "coherence" and "paragraph organization" and less on "appropriateness of essay to writing assignment" than do teachers from private institutions. The meaning and significance of these differences is necessarily subject to varying interpretations. We expect that some of these differences may reflect differing program goals, curricula, student population, and other variables.

Table IV.2 shows the cues that are considered by all responding teachers to have a moderate influence on the grading of papers. Cues listed in this table have mean ratings of between 2.5 and 3.0 for all raters, indicating they are thought to be of some importance in evaluating student writing. Generally, items listed in this table are more specific and less global than those listed previously in Table IV.1. Included in this table are cues dealing with specific grammar and usage problems, diction, sentence and paragraph structure, and audience.

For the most part there is agreement among teachers from the different types of institutions concerning which cues they say influence them more than others, but a few anomalies stand out. "Topic sentences," with an average ranking of 17, is the item ranked eighth in importance for teachers from two-year colleges. "Paragraphing," also with an average ranking of 17, is ranked eighth for teachers in private four-year colleges. "Originality," with an average ranking of 19, is ranked seventh for public university teachers.

Potentially more disturbing is the fact that "word choice" is ranked twentieth by all teachers while "diction" is only ranked twenty-eighth. Both "word choice" and "diction" were included in the list of 52 cues through an oversight of the researchers. "Word choice was about tenth on the list and "diction" about fourtieth. Our inadvertant redundancy, however, does provide a kind of check on the validity of this particular question. One would naturally have expected these two cues to be ranked about the same. The disparity is at least partially explained when one considers how closely the items in Table IV.2 are bunched together. All have mean ratings of between 2.5 and 3.0 on the 5-point scale. Thus, though "word choice" and "diction" are eight ranks apart out of 52 ranks, their mean ratings are fairly close: 2.60 and 2.72, respectively. This suggests that especially in Table IV.2 where the greatest bunching of rankings occurs, only large differences in rankings should be looked at for possible significance.

Cue	Rank for 2-YR (N=18)	Rank for PRI 4-YR (N=45)	Rank for PUB 4-YR (N=51)	Rank for PRI UNIV (N=20)	Rank for PUB UNIV (N=40)	Rank for ALL (N=174)
sentence structure	17*	9*	13	15*	24*	15
run-on and fused sentences	10	11*	18	18*	30	16
paragraphing	14*	8	20*	11	31*	17*
topic sentences	8*	14*	16*	12*	36*	17*
originality	32*	21*	24*	32*	7	19
word choice	21*	20	31	18*	11*	20
density of ideas	12	27*	20*	25*	19	21*
redundency of ideas	14*	18*	24*	32*	20	21*
persuasiveness	29*	18*	22	22*	21*	23
accomodation of audience needs	32*	34	16*	25*	14*	24
fragments	19*	21*	19	25*	36*	25
transitions	29*	23	30	24	26*	26*
consistent voice	24*	33	24*	25*	18	26*
effectiveness of concluding section	21*	25*	32	25*	24*	28*
diction	37*	25*	28*	18*	26*	28*
jargon/bureaucratic language	24*	30*	28*	18*	31*	30
vocabulary	35*	27*	35*	15*	29	31*
sentence variety	35*	27*	24*	35*	33	31*
authentic voice	21*	41	23	25*	21*	33
informational value	34	35	33	32*	26*	34
punctuation	24*	30*	37*	38*	34	35
rhetorical stance	11	39*	34	38*	23	36
dangling and misplaced modifiers	41	32	39	38*	35	37

Table IV.2. Cues Having Some Importance for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Judged by All Teachers. (Ties within institutions are indicated by asterisks.)

Table IV.3 completes the first series of tables on the cues to which the teachers say they respond when evaluating student writing. Table IV.3 contains cues with mean ratings of greater than 3.0 on the 5-point scale, indicating that the teachers considered these cues to have little to no influence in their evaluation of student papers. This does not mean that items in this table are considered unimportant by teachers, only that teachers do not think that those cues influence them when they evaluate student papers. Table IV.3 was provided for the sake of completeness, but it is also revealing

in its own right. The teachers generally believe, for example, that literary uses of language ("similies" and "metaphors") and "humor" have little or no influence on their evaluation of papers. "Spelling" is considered of some influence only by teachers in two-year colleges. "Essay length," historically a good predictor of writing quality, is not something teachers say influences their evaluation of student writing. Neither is "handwriting" or "neatness." That so many mechanical aspects of writing appear in this table of least important cues--spelling, sentence length, capitalization, neatness, and handrwriting--suggests that writing teachers reject the notion that good writing is equivalent to mechanical correctness and further suggests that they are striving to teach something that goes beyond mechanical correctness in their classes.

Cue	Rank for 2-YR (N=18)	Rank for PRI 4-YR (N=45)	Rank for PUB 4-YR (N=51)	Rank for PRI UNIV (N=20)	Rank for PUB UNIV (N=40)	Rank for ALL (N=174)
repetition of key words and phrases	39	36	42	31	38*	38*
choice of subject matter	24*	39*	40	41	40	38*
parallelism	40	37*	37*	42	38*	40
spelling	29*	42	41	35*	41	41
sentence length	42*	37*	35*	43*	42	42
essay length	42*	44	44	43*	43	43
syllogistic reasoning	45	43	43	45	48	44
analogies	47	45	45	35*	44	45
capitalization	46	46	47	48	47	46*
humor	46*	42*	47*	46	47	45*
metaphors	48*	47*	48	46	49	48
entertainment value	48*	51	49*	50	45*	49
neatness	50	49*	49*	51	50	50
similies	51*	49*	51	49	51	51
handwriting/typing	51*	52	52	52	52	52

Table IV.3. Least Important Cues for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Ranked by All Teachers. (Ties within institutions are indicated by asterisks.)

Tables IV.4 through IV.8 show the mean ratings given to the cues by teachers in different institutional types. It was from these ratings that we derived Table IV.1 and from similar ratings that we derived Tables IV.2 and IV.3. These tables provide a summary of the cues that teachers from different types of institutions say affect them most when they evaluate student writing. Table IV.4 shows the ratings given by teachers from two-year colleges, Table IV.5 by teachers from private four-year institutions, and so on. In each

table, the cues having ratings of 2.5 or lower on the 5-point scale (indicating the items that teachers think are of the most importance in evaluating student papers) are rank ordered. For example, in Table IV.4, which shows the most important cues as judged by teachers from two-year colleges, the 20 cues shown, from "appropriateness of essay to writing topic" to "fragments," appear in rank order.

Cue	Mean Rating	Var.	Rank	Rank for all teachers
appropriateness of essay to writing topic	1.78	1.95	1	7
support for major ideas	1.89	2.22	2*	1
quality of ideas	1.89	1.87	2*	8
grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension	1.94	1.82	4	3*
paragraph organization or structure	2.00	1.65	5*	3*
unity of topic	2.00	2.24	5*	5
logical reasoning	2.00	1.65	5*	6
thesis statements	2.06	2.29	8*	9
topic sentences	2.06	2.29	8*	18
run-on and fused sentences	2.11	1.52	10	16
coherence	2.17	2.15	11	2
density of ideas	2.22	1.83	12	21*
accuracy of information	2.28	2.33	13	12
redundancy of ideas	2.33	1.41	14*	21*
paragraphing	2.33	2.14	14*	17*
level of abstraction/ specificity	2.33	2.00	14*	10
effectiveness of introductory section	2.39	2.49	17*	11
sentence structure	2.39	2.02	17*	15
syntactic "fluency"	2.50	1.32	19*	13*
fragments	2.50	1.68	19*	25

Table IV.4. Most Important Cues for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Identified by Teachers in Two-year College. (N=18).

Cue	Mean Rating	Var.	Rank	Rank for all teachers
support for major ideas	1.80	2.39	1	1
coherence	1.89	2.28	2	2
paragraph organization or structure	1.93	2.25	3	3*
thesis statements	2.00	2.41	4	9
logical reasoning	2.04	2.04	5	6
grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension	2.07	2.25	6	3*
unity of topic	2.09	2.27	7	5
paragraphing	2.24	2.05	8	17*
effectiveness of introductory section	2.29	2.03	9*	11
sentence structure	2.29	2.30	9*	15
appropriateness of essay to assigmment	2.33	2.55	11*	7
quality of ideas	2.33	2.09	11*	8
run-on and fused sentences	2.33	1.82	11*	16
syntactic "fluency"	2.36	2.05	14*	13*
topic sentences	2.36	2.19	14*	17*
methods of development	2.38	2.20	16	13*
level of abstraction/ specificity	2.40	2.16	17	10
redundancy of ideas	2.44	1.62	18*	21*
persuasiveness	2.44	1.84	18*	23
word choice	2.47	1.80	20	20
originality	2.49	1.89	21*	19
fragments	2.49	1.67	21*	25

Table IV.5. Most Important Cues for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Identified by Teachers in Private Four-year Colleges. (N=45).

Cue	Mean Rating	Var.	Rank	Rank for all teachers
coherence	1.96	2.12	1	2
support for major ideas	2.04	2.60	2*	1
unity of topic	2.04	2.00	2*	5
quality of ideas	2.22	2.09	4	8
paragraph organization or structure	2.24	2.18	5*	3*
appropriateness of essay to writing assignment	2.24	2.06	5*	7
grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension	2.26	2.23	7*	3*
logical reasoning	2.26	2.19	7*	6
thesis statements	2.28	2.32	9*	9
level of abstraction/ specificity	2.28	2.04	9*	10
effectiveness of introductory section	2.29	2.01	11	11
accuracy of information	2.37	2.08	12	12
sentence structure	2.39	2.00	13	15
syntactic "fluency"	2.43	1.81	14	13*
methods of development	2.47	1.97	15	13*
accommodation of audience needs	2.49	2.26	16*	24
topic sentences	2.49	2.10	16*	17*

Table IV.6. Most Important Cues for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Identified by Teachers in Public Four-year Colleges. (N=51).

Cue	Mean Rating	Var.	Rank	Rank for all teachers
support for major ideas	1.90	2.62	1	1
paragraph organization or structure	2.15	2.45	2	3*
unity of topic	2.20	2.06	3	5
grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension	2.25	2.93	4*	3*
appropriateness of essay to writing assignment	2.25	2.83	4*	7
quality of ideas	2.35	2.13	6*	8
coherence	2.35	2.66	6*	2
accuracy of information	2.35	2.03	6*	12
logical reasoning	2.40	2.67	9	6
effectiveness of introductory section	2.45	2.05	10	11
paragraphing	2.50	2.05	11	17*

Table IV.7. Most Important Cues for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Identified by Teachers in Private Universities. (N=20).

Cue	Mean Rating	Var.	Rank	Rank for all teachers
support for major ideas	1.97	2.53	1	1
level of abstraction/ specificity	2.22	2.43	2	10
grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension	2.25	2.20	3*	3*
logical reasoning	2.25	2.34	3*	6
appropriateness of essay to topic	2.25	2.34	3*	7
quality of ideas	2.27	2.87	6	8
originality	2.35	2.13	7	19
coherence	2.37	2.70	8	2
thesis statements	2.47	2.10	9*	9
paragraph organization or structure	2.47	2.56	9*	3*

Table IV.8. Most Important Cues for the Evaluation of Student Writing as Identified by Teachers in Public Universities. (N=40).

Throughout this chapter we have emphasized that these tables summarize what teachers say most influences their evaluation of student writing. We do not know how much this reported influence agrees with or differs from what actually influences the teachers' evaluation of student writing. To a large extent the validity of the responses depends on the self-knowledge of the teachers we surveyed and on the degree to which they have made evaluation of writing a conscious, as opposed to intuitive, process for themselves. In some cases, teachers' responses to the given cues might be influenced as much by their ideal philosophy of evaluation as by their actual practice. For example, teachers responding to our survey consistently rated "neatness" and "handwriting/typing" as the two items out of all fifty-two possible cues that influence them least in evaluating student papers (see Table IV.2). One might find this surprising in light of the many psychological studies that have found superficial aspects of a paper, like handwriting and neatness, to have a significant influence on the evaluation of the paper. However, instead of suggesting that teachers are unaware of how neatness and handwriting may affect their judgements, the universally low ratings for "neatness" and "handwriting/typing" may suggest quite the opposite: that teachers are aware of the possibility of being unduly influenced by a paper's appearance but make a conscious effort during evaluation to negate that influence. This example shows probably better than any other, that much caution and common sense must be employed in any attempt to interpret self-report data of this sort.

At the same time, if there is some general validity in the data

discussed in the present chapter--if the teachers' responses summarized in Tables IV.1 through IV.8 paint at least a partial picture of what teachers consciously try to look for when they evaluate student papers--then there are many similarities and a few important differences in the way teachers from different types of institutions approach the problem of evaluating student papers.

To summarize, the four cues teachers say most influence their evaluation of student papers are, in order of apparent importance, "support for major ideas," "coherence," "grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension," and "paragraph organization or structure." By far the most widely agreed-on of these cues is "support for major ideas." The apparent differences between teachers from different types of institutions are more difficult to sort out. Teachers from two-year colleges, for example, considered "appropriateness of essay to writing assignment" the most important cue although it ranked only seventh overall. Teachers from private and public four-year institutions placed less than average emphasis on grammar. The significance of these kinds of differences is not clear. In fact, the relatively large variation in responses within institutional type suggests that much caution should be used in trying to identify trends within the data reported in the present chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ASPECTS OF THE TEACHING OF COLLEGE COMPOSITION

V. 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the items on our questionnaire for college composition teachers asked the respondents to list and discuss the most successful aspects of their teaching in college writing courses. Of the 181 teachers who responded to the teachers' survey, 115 (or 63.5%) wrote discursive statements about the most successful aspects of their teaching. These 115 responses were content analyzed and subsequently coded for sorting and analysis by computer.

The procedure for doing the content analyses consisted of four steps. First, two of the authors independently read a representative subsample of the discursive responses, and each made a comprehensive list of all the different statements within these responses. Two statements were grouped together if they seemed to say essentially the same thing. The second step consisted of reconciling the small number of discrepancies between the two investigators' lists of successful aspects they had identified in the subsample. The third step involved constructing a coding sheet which enabled readers to check off those successful aspects of composition teaching cited in the 115 discursive statements. The fourth and final step consisted of the content analyses themselves. Two investigators read each discursive statement. When disagreements occurred, they were resolved by a third investigator.

The content analyses, as reflected in the completed coding sheets, were then entered into the computer, sorted according to institutional type, and analyzed according to the frequency of occurrence within all institutions and within institutional types.

V. 2. MOST SUCCESSFUL ASPECTS OF TEACHING

Those responses which were cited by more than about 20% of the 115 responding teachers are summarized in Table V.1. These successful aspects of teaching writing are rank-ordered according to the percentage of the 115 teachers who cited them: the larger the percentage of teachers citing a particular aspect, the closer that aspect appears to the top of Table V.1.

Most Successful Aspects	2-Yr (N=18)	Priv 4-Yr (N=39)	Publ 4-Yr (N=41)	Priv Univ (N=18)	Publ Univ (N=41)	All (N=115)
Conferencing	50.0	39.0	48.7	34.1	44.4	42.3
Teaching Revision	11.1	34.1	41.0	43.9	72.2	39.7
Peer Editing	16.7	34.1	20.5	46.3	33.3	31.6
Using Student Writing as Text	22.2	22.2	30.8	31.7	33.3	27.7
Collaborative Learning	33.3	22.0	25.6	31.7	27.8	27.6
Changing Attitudes Towards Writing	27.8	31.7	20.5	24.4	33.3	26.3
Teaching Invention	11.1	26.8	28.2	26.8	27.8	25.6
Making the Writing Class a Workshop	16.7	4.9	20.5	20.5	22.2	21.8
Teaching Writing as Process	5.6	17.1	20.5	29.3	33.3	21.2
Developing Audience Awareness	11.1	22.2	15.4	22.2	33.3	19.9

Table V.1. Percentage of Responding Teachers Indicating the Most Successful Aspects of Their Teaching in College Writing Courses.

It is noteworthy that none of the aspects of teaching listed in Table V.1 was cited by more than 42.3% of the 115 responding teachers, suggesting considerable variation in successful teaching practice as perceived by the teachers we surveyed. This variation, coupled with the relatively small percentages of teachers citing any one aspect, suggests that there is no real consensus about what or how teachers ought to teach in college and university writing courses.

Let us illustrate the problem. As Table V.1 shows, 42.3% of the 115 teachers cited "conferencing" among the most successful aspects of their teaching. Although 42.3% indicates a good deal of agreement among the responding teachers about the success of "conferencing" as a type of instruction, that percentage also means that 57.7% of the 115 teachers do not consider conferencing among the successful aspects of their teaching. Thus there is no strong consensus about even the most widely cited instructional method. If anything, Table V.1 demonstrates the wide variety of successful teaching methods in writing courses.

Another difficulty in interpreting Table V.1 surfaces when some of the successful aspects of teaching are seen in the context of results we have summarized elsewhere in the present document. Again, consider conferencing. Although conferencing is the most frequently cited successful aspect of

teaching, on the average only 9.2% of the teachers' time is devoted to using it as an instructional method (see Table III.10), the least amount of time given over to any method of instruction. It should be noted, however, that this 9.2% is the amount of time that all teachers average on conferencing. The teachers who cited conferencing as the most successful aspect of their teaching probably spend somewhat more time using it. However, even if the teachers who cited conferencing were the ones who did most of the conferencing, it would [illegible] that they devoted less than 20% of their instructional time to their most successful teaching method on the average.

Yet another problem has to do with the relatively small number (18 in both cases) of teachers from two-year colleges and from private universities who wrote about the most successful aspects of their teaching. With the small number of responses from teachers in those two groups, it is unlikely that the percentages for those groups of teachers are at all representative. Even the groups containing 39 or more teachers may not be representative enough, even of the best composition teachers in the country, to allow us to be comfortable making generalizations about how teachers in those types of institutions ought to teach writing.

The percentage of teachers from two-year colleges who cited the ten aspects of teaching listed in Table V.1 differs most markedly from the percentage of all 115 teachers who cited those same aspects. Compared with the percentage for all 115 teachers, the percentage of two-year teachers who cited some aspects is quite small. Among those aspects cited infrequently by teachers in two-year colleges and more frequently by other groups of teachers are the following: "teaching revision," "teaching invention," and "teaching writing as process." Perhaps some of the differences between two-year college teachers and the other groups are partially attributable to the different student populations which teachers in two-year colleges serve. The smaller percentages of two-year college teachers citing process-related aspects are particularly interesting. In fact, the smaller percentage of two-year college teachers citing "teaching revision" (11.% compared with 39.7% of all 115 teachers), "peer editing" (16.7% compared with 31.6%), "teaching invention" (11.1% compared with 35.6%), and "teaching writing as process" (5.6% compared with 21.2%) suggests perhaps a different philosophy of composition in two-year colleges than in the other four types of institutions.

Collectively, the responses of the 115 teachers often emphasize the relationships between several of the most frequently cited items. "Conferencing," the most often cited item by all respondents and by teachers representing all institutional types except one, was frequently discussed as a way of intervening in students' composing processes to increase their awareness and control of those processes. As one teacher put the matter,

> I . . . feel that allowing students to go through the drafting process, with their peers and in conference with me, develops their sensitivity to the writing process; that is, they gain a sense of what goes right and what goes wrong in their writing.

But conferencing was discussed in connection with other specific concerns as

well. Several teachers addressed conferencing as a way to motivate students by establishing a two-way channel to discuss their particular needs and ideas. Conferencing, as one teacher noted,

> . . . promotes communication between myself [sic] and my student; gives them [sic] a chance to ask questions they might have been ashamed to ask in class (some of them are ashamed of their failings when it comes to writing); and usually ends by increasing both their self-confidence and their enthusiasm.

Another teacher discussed conferencing and its benefits in this way:

> The shift to conferencing and postponed grading allows student (and teacher) attention to become focused on the writing itself rather than the grade. No longer is the student concerned with "What is the difference between a C+ and a B- paper?" but rather asks "Did I do what you suggested in this revision? Did this work?"

Other teachers also counted conferencing among the most successful aspects of their teaching because it provided an opportunity for in-depth interactive analysis of the students' writing, as illustrated in the following statement:

> My most effective instruction takes place one-to-one in conferences, because I can be thorough, candid, and, most crucially, hear what the student says about his own writing.

Such attention to the specifics of the students' writing sometimes suggested to the teachers the relationship between professional writers and their editors. As one teacher wrote, conferencing allows the teacher and student to confront a text "as if the teacher was [sic] an editor and the two are [sic] getting something ready for publication." Another teacher discussed the ability of the teacher as editor to prompt revision:

> A writing teacher has most effect upon students as an editor of their papers if he can criticize without solving problems for them. I call students' attention to problems and direct them to materials necessary to teach them skills they lack. Then they must revise the papers, to test their mastery of the material.

"Teaching revision," the second most frequently cited aspect of successful teaching, was cited by 39.7% of the 115 responding teachers. It was cited most often by teachers from private universities and least often by those from two-year colleges. Some respondents believed that teaching revision was successful in their classes because revision allowed them to focus their "students' attention on that aspect of composing which is most accessible." According to one teacher, having students study the revisions of practicing writers

> . . . helps students to see that even the best writers produce

> their work through a process involving careful thought and reworking. Writing thus loses much of its "mystery" and becomes something plastic, kinetic, not static or "automatic."

Perhaps because they saw the teaching of revision as a way to make students more aware of both their own texts and the their own processes of text production, several teachers put revision at the center of the curriculum and employed instructional methods consonant with it. One teacher wrote:

> I organize my introductory composition class around the concept that successful writing comes from revision; therefore, the class is usually organized to meet two days a week as a whole. . . . [During] the other two class days the group is divided into four roundtables.

"Peer editing," "using student writing as text," and "collaborative learning" are, of course, all aspects of the type of instruction this teacher describes.

"Peer editing" was the third most frequently cited successful aspect, with almost 32% of the 115 teachers naming it. "Peer editing" was cited most often by teachers from public universities and least often by those from two-year colleges and private four-year schools. "Using student writing as text" and "collaborative learning" were both cited by 27.6% of the 115 responding teachers, the former most often cited by teachers from private universities and the latter most often cited by teachers from two-year colleges.

Many of the teachers who cited "peer editing" focused on the usefulness of that method in teaching students to read critically as well as to revise effectively. One teacher stated the matter as follows:

> No matter what writing course I teach, I use the peer editing technique to teach the revision process. It is, by far, the most successful aspect of my instruction because it provides practice in critical reading and writing.

Other teachers found peer editing successful because it yielded evaluations of writing which students take seriously, as did the teacher who wrote that

> Students do not care that much anymore about an instructor's opinion concerning their writing. They do care, deeply, about the opinion of their peers. Successful composition teachers learn to move that peer opinion into a force that motivates good writing. A workshop centered on student writing--one where student writing becomes its primary text--is a way of achieving this goal.

This statement provides an illustration of how closely related successful aspects of teaching are in the minds of several of the responding teachers. The writer stresses motivation, peer editing, workshopping, and using the students' writing as composition text, all of which are concepts embedded in some of the most successful aspects of teaching listed in Table V.1.

The integration of reading and writing skills through analyses of student essays was not an uncommon theme among the 30 or so teachers who counted "using student writing as text" among the most successful aspects of their teaching. One teacher stressed the relationship between writing and critical reading in the following way: "In class, we examine dittoed student papers day after day, analyzing their effectiveness in terms of rhetorical criteria (writer--text--audience)." Another teacher described such a class in this way:

> Class writers, whose papers are dittoed and distributed to the entire class. . . , benefit from the feedback generated by me and by their group members. Examination of student writing rather than that of professional writers (who often seem distant and unapproachable) is more meaningful to the students. Similiarly, those who critique learn about clarity and coherence and other strategies of effective writing.

Several of the teachers who cited "using student writing as text" focused on the connection between the student paper used as text and the writing that students are expected to do. One teacher wrote, for example, that "When I teach a point of composition, I find that an appropriate student paper is the clearest sample I can offer students." Such statements suggest that student texts may be appropriate instructional devices because they are closer to the students' experiences than are essays written by professionals.

While some teachers apparently use student texts in writing classes because those texts are accessible models, many of the approximately 30 teachers who successfully use "collaborative learning" do so because it increases student motivation. One teacher claimed that "forms of collaborative learning, such as peer critiques, peer tutoring or topic interviews" were successful because they "mobilized peer group influence to improve a student's writing and thinking."

Several teachers named various forms of collaborative learning--such as group brainstorming, group composing, and group-centered discussions--as effective options to more traditional instructional methods, but options requiring careful integration into a comprehensive approach to the teaching of writing. As one teacher wrote,

> The [students] enjoy doing group work, and I believe that they learn more that way than they would just listening to me lecture at them. But I find that group work alone is not enough. Basic material must be presented to them and discussed by them before they can effectively evaluate the writing of their peers. After I have presented, say, paragraphing, I ask them to look for topic sentences and paragraph development in the papers of their group. Each week, something else is added to the list.

The teachers' responses--as in the above quotations--regularly treated specific aspects of teaching in the context of other aspects. An awareness of such relationships suggests a range of concerns and a developed sensitivity to the scope of the issues involved.

The sixth most frequently cited successful aspect of teaching was "changing attitudes toward writing." This aspect was cited by 26.3% of the 115 responding teachers. It was cited most often by teachers from private universities and least often by teachers from private four-year schools. Among the responses which indicated that changing attitudes was a successful aspect of teaching were several statements like the following, which stresses the importance of getting students to view writing in its social dimensions: "I show students that writing is a social activity—one writes about something for somebody." Other teachers saw themselves as successful in changing the way students valued their own writing, "by encouraging students to believe that they have something worthwhile to say." Another teacher indicated that changing student attitudes toward writing was contingent on the teacher

> encouraging them to see that the process of writing is a process of discovery, a process of self-transcendence . . . ; helping them to understand that the act of writing presumes the intention to communicate and, therefore, an obligation to respect the needs of their audience . . . ; helping them to see that their knowledge of themselves and of the world depends, in large part, upon their ability to participate maturely in our common language.

And this teacher went on to say that

> The students were encouraged to think more about what happened when they wrote, and to this end they kept a "meta-journal" in which they analyzed the writing process, identified their [writing] problems. . . .

Thus, under the general rubric of "changing attitudes toward writing," teachers sought both to alter what might be called misconceptions about the nature of writing and to teach students to value writing as an aid to thinking, learning, and self-awareness. Not unexpectedly, many of the teachers who saw themselves as successful in changing student attitudes toward writing also saw themselves as successful in motivating students to write and in developing among their students an awareness of their own composing processes.

In addition to "teaching revision," teaching other aspects of composing frequently appeared among the successful aspects, particularly "teaching invention" and "developing audience awareness." The former was cited by 25.6% of the 115 teachers and the latter by 19.9%. With the notable exception of teachers from two-year colleges, about equal percentages of teachers from all groups cited "teaching invention" as a succesful aspect of their teaching. "Developing audience awareness" was cited most often by teachers from public universities, with about one-third of those in that group naming it. In contrast, "developing audience awareness" was cited by only 11.1% of the teachers from two-year colleges and by only 15.4% of the teachers from public four-year institutions. Teachers who cited "developing audience awareness" typically did not elaborate on the methods which led to their success.

Most of the teachers who said that "teaching invention" was one of the

most successful aspects of their teaching wrote about invention in very simplistic terms. Virtually none of the statements suggested that those teachers used in their classrooms one or more of the systematic invention heuristics discussed in the literature on composition theory and pedagogoy. Typical of most of the statements about invention are the following: "In Composition 1 I have found emphasis on prewriting to pay off. I have used journals, free writing, and student diaries of their own prewriting successfully." And again:

> I have found in my composition classes that an emphasis on prewriting and what Donald Murray calls "internal revision" are most helpful to my students. I teach writing--both creative and expository--as a process of discovery. I stress the importance of several early drafts just to find out what they have to say.

Many of the successful aspects of teaching we have discussed thus far relate either directly or indirectly to teaching writing as process. Indeed, it might be said that of the ten aspects of teaching listed in Table V.1, most are indicative of classrooms wherein the principal focus is on writing processes. In addition to the substantial number of teachers who said they were successful in teaching various aspects of composing, a fair number indicated that the most successful aspect of their teaching was teaching composing in general. In fact, of the 115 responding teachers, over 21% indicated as much. "Teaching writing as process" was cited most frequently by teachers in private and public universities and least often by teachers in two-year colleges.

As we have suggested, many of the aspects of teaching listed in Table V.1 point to composition classes where the primary emphasis is on teaching writing as process. Given the frequency with which "making the writing class a writing workshop" was cited explicitly and the frequency with which it was implicit in the statements about successful aspects of teaching, our sense is that the majority of responding teachers believe that workshopping and teaching composing processes go hand in hand. Of the 115 responding teachers, nearly 22% cited workshopping explicitly; and of the 70-plus teachers who cited teaching one or more aspects of composing, the notion of the composition class as workshop was usually implicit in their remarks.

Many teachers did, however, write expressly about workshopping. One teacher wrote that

> The writing class is or ought to be a writing (producing) lab, and students need to be reading and writing a great deal--something every day (starting a new paper, revising a previous one at least once a week).

Another teacher noted that

> I changed from a more structured writing course in which class time was devoted to discussion of essays and literature to a less

> structured course in which more class time is devoted to discussions of student writing . . . , to more emphasis on student revisions, and to arranging class time, on a regular basis, for individual discussion of student writing.

Several teachers suggested that the "student-centered approach" at the heart of workshopping is simply more successful than the alternative "teacher-centered approach." As one teacher put the matter,

> I find that the less talking I do and the more writing my students do, the more successful the course becomes. I am, therefore, trying to move toward free writing, group discussion, conferences, workshops on editing, and so forth and away from lectures.

Another teacher wrote that

> I prefer class discussions to lectures. Because writing is a communication skill, the instructor can't just tell the students what works and what doesn't; they have to find out for themselves. The more class participation, the better . . . . I try group discussions, in-class reports, and anything else I can to encourage participation in such classes.

Another teacher stressed the importance of peers in such classes because getting

> students to think logically and critically on a subject of interest to them seems to have a lasting effect on their writing techniques. Once they become aware of flaws in their peers' logic, they also become more aware of flaws in their own logic.

In spite of the emphasis, expressed or implied, on classroom techniques which can be associated with workshopping, several teachers attributed their success in teaching composition to their ability to use a variety of instructional methods, as did the teacher who wrote that

> I am convinced that all three basic instructional methodologies listed below are important:
>
> 1. full-class, teacher-led discussions of rhetorical techniques and professional models;
> 2. small-group discussions of both professional and student writing; and
> 3. teacher-student discussions of rough drafts and explorations of techniques of revision.

While most of the respondents in our sample felt that they had been successful in teaching writing, others were less certain. Several teachers viewed their uncertainty about their success in teaching writing in terms of what they saw as a profession uncertain about its own conception of itself. Capturing the essence of this sense of uncertainty we saw in many of the statements, one teacher voiced concerns shared by many in the profession:

> What works? Define "success." It seems to me it has very little to do with curriculum or instruction as that phrase is narrowly understood. There are hundreds and hundreds of English textbooks available for use in freshman courses (compared to Economics or Art History, for example). This argues a certain confusion in the field, or a remarkable versatility, take your choice.

Another teacher felt particularly skeptical of her own "success" and of the "success" of any approach which claimed too much:

> First, I make no claims for success in eleven years of teaching composition. For that reason I may have been a poor choice for participating in this survey. I have always been skeptical of trendy methods of teaching anything, especially those methods that promise amazing results with a minimum of effort and a maximum of pleasure.

This teacher went on to address an issue which concerns us all, whatever our level of skepticism or experience:

> Fifteen weeks, of course, is absurdly short when it comes to remedying years of desuetude. Just as some of their rust is shed, students stop writing once again, in many cases never to write again. And perhaps that is the problem. Some people insist, perhaps correctly, that the need to express oneself in writing is diminishing each year. But that is another problem, another survey.

VI

AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEACHING OF WRITING

VI. 1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this technical report has been on teachers and teaching. Through a national survey of some of the best teachers of writing in the country, we tried to ascertain as much as we could about the teachers and teaching of writing in this country's colleges and universities. We wanted to find out, within the limited framework of surveys, as much as we could about the contexts in which that teaching occurs. We wanted to find out about the teachers themselves--the backgrounds which have prepared them to teach writing, their teaching experience, the kinds of courses they teach, and their workloads. In addition, we wanted to find out about their teaching--what they actually do in the classroom, what and how much they make their students write, how they approach the problem of evaluating student papers, and what overall aspects of their teaching they find most effective. In short, we wanted this survey to help build a picture of what the teaching of writing is like in colleges and universities in the United States. This last chapter sums up our findings and suggests how they contribute to that picture. Most importantly, the present chapter suggests the diversity that we found among the teachers responding to our survey, a diversity characteristic not so much of the teachers as of their teaching strategies and of the conditions under which they teach.

The remainder of the current chapter is divided into two major sections. The following section focuses mainly on the teachers and the last on their teaching. Both sections are subdivided according to the kinds of information they present. Where possible an attempt is made to generalize beyond the bare numbers presented elsewhere in the report, but, as always, we hesitate to draw hard and fast conclusions where our data are subject to varying interpretations.

VI. 2. TEACHERS OF WRITING

As we stated at the outset of this report, our sample is not representative of all writing teachers in the country. Instead it is drawn from among the best teachers of writing as chosen by a national sample of directors of writing programs. One should keep this in mind when considering the survey results presented in this and previous chapters. That the teachers surveyed were among those considered the best writing teachers is especially relevant in the following sections dealing with educational background and teaching experience.

Educational Background. The teachers who responded to our survey, in as much as they represent the best teachers of writing in the country, might also be expected to be among those most educated in rhetoric, composition, the teaching of writing, and related areas. This seems to be borne out by the responses to the survey questions dealing with educational background. As is reported in section I. 3. of the present report, most of the teachers who responded to our survey had taken a number of rhetoric-related courses at the graduate level, on the average about fourteen semester hours of such courses. Teachers from different types of institutions generally had the same amount of training, with the notable exception of teachers from four-year public institutions. Those teachers had taken about two times as many rhetoric-related courses as their colleagues in other types of institutions. Generally speaking the teachers responding to our survey seem well-prepared to teach writing, a conclusion also suggested, although less forcefully, by the advanced degrees they hold.

Almost all of the teachers responding to our survey have advanced degrees; nearly half have doctoral degrees. The number of advanced degrees among responding teachers and the number of rhetoric-related courses taken are especially impressive when one considers that some of the teachers figuring into the averages are graduate students who have not yet obtained a terminal degree or finished taking rhetoric-related courses.

Teaching Experience. The quality of the teachers responding to our survey is also apparent in their teaching experience. Although the amount of experience of particular teachers ranged from virtually none to almost fifty years, teachers from each institutional type consistently averaged between ten and twelve years of teaching experience. The average amount of teaching experience was lowest in public universities, probably a reflection of the number of graduate teaching assistants in those schools. It would be interesting to compare the experience of the teachers who answered our survey to the profession as a whole, but we have no basis for doing so.

Both educational background and teaching experience do suggest, however, that the teachers who answered our survey should be among those best able to answer questions about the teaching of writing. They may not be representative of all writing teachers in colleges and universities, but they are clearly an experienced, well-educated and highly regarded subset of those who teach writing well. Thus, what they have said about the teaching of writing in the previous chapters of this report should be given serious consideration.

Workload. One important area in which the responding teachers may be fairly representative of the larger population of college and university teachers is in workload. Most would agree that teachers' workloads determine how much time they can spend with individual students, how much time they can spend evaluating individual writing, and, generally, how much time they can spend teaching. Our survey seems to indicate that the workload of writing teachers is high across the board, although we make no explicit comparison with teachers in other disciplines. The average workload for teachers from all institutions is the equivalent of teaching seven and a half courses per year. Broken down into its components, this average workload means that

teachers teach about about four writing and two non-writing courses each year, perform the equivalent of about one course a year in administrative duties, and take about half a graduate course a year. Though probably no one comes close to this average, it does give a good general idea of how the duties and responsibilities of teachers responding to our survey are apportioned.

Systematic differences in workload are also apparent among teachers from different types of universities. As we report in chapter I (I. 3. 2.), teachers from two-year colleges have the heaviest workload, the equivalent of about nine courses, while teachers from private and public universities have the smallest, with an average course load equivalent of less than seven courses a year. Teachers from four-year colleges are in the middle with an average annual workload of about seven and a half courses. As we emphasized earlier in the report, the figures given do not reflect the fact that teachers in many four-year colleges and most universities are expected to publish in scholarly journals. Demands for publication on teachers' time represents a hidden or informal addition to their actual workloads.

We must again stress that this information is derived from a large number of teachers in very different situations. Some of the responses came from graduate students working on advanced degrees. Others came from part-time non-tenure-track faculty. Still others came from tenured or tenure-track faculty. Even within particular types of institutions, we found considerable variation with respect to educational background, teaching experience, and workload.

VI. 3. TEACHING OF WRITING

Besides trying to identify some of the important contexts which may influence the effectiveness of writing teachers, we wanted to find out how these best teachers of writing teach. The following section summarizes our major findings about teaching. Although the information is imperfect and incomplete, although it demonstrates too well that trends can only be identified by slighting diversity and vice versa, and although the material falls agonizingly short at times of presenting a neat and coherent picture, the material found in this technical report and summarized in the following pages probably comes very close to representing the actual state and practice of teaching writing in this country.

Our main findings about teaching can be classified under the following six headings:

1. the amount of writing required by teachers,

2. the kinds of writing required by teachers,

3. the evaluation of student writing,

4. the instructional activities used in the classroom,

5. the curricular elements taught, and

6. the most successful aspects of teaching as perceived by teachers.

These six classes of information can themselves be grouped to form larger categories. The first three can be seen as focusing on student writing while the last three focus more directly on teaching. Alternately, the amount and kinds of writing required might be seen as being linked to curriculum. The six classes can also be thought of as representing both personal and impersonal as well as general and specific aspects of teaching.

In probing these six dimensions of teaching, we were trying to take an x-ray of the teaching of writing in this country. We knew we could not draw a complete anatomy of that teaching, but as much as possible we wanted to cover the whole body and we wanted to get at least a sense of how these different aspects of teaching varied among different teachers and how they interacted with other aspects of teaching. Quite a lot to ask for from a bulk-mail questionnaire! Yet we were very fortunate that the majority of the responding teachers willingly and dilligently answered our sometimes confusing or seemingly inappropriate questions. As a result we feel that we did learn a fair amount about the way writing is taught in this country.

Amount of Writing. Writing is the common denominator in all writing courses, but not enough research has been done to either establish or deny a link between the amount of writing required in a particular writing course and that course's effectiveness. While writing programs may specify the amount of writing to be done in a particular course, the amount of writing students actually do in a particular class is determined in practice by the teacher. Finding out how much writing is done in writing courses and finding out how this varies across sections of the same course or across equivalent courses in different institutions should thus reveal quite a bit about both teachers and writing programs. If a connection is ever established between the amount and kinds of writing required in a course and the effectiveness of that course in teaching writing, then it may also prove useful for evaluating those courses and programs.

Our findings concerning the amount of writing done in different writing courses and at different types of institutions are presented in chapter III (III. 2.) above. Several of the things we found out may have important implications for teachers, researchers, and those trying to come up with ways of evaluating writing programs. By far the most striking finding is the variability in teacher responses. There is very little consistency even within the same kind of course in the amount of writing students are required to do during a semester. For example, in the basic nonremedial/nondevelopmental, freshman composition class, the average amount of writing required from students is about forty pages a semester. However, the standard deviation in those responses is almost thirty! This means in practical terms that there is no consensus among writing teachers on the amount of writing required in freshman writing courses. Teacher responses vary considerably both above and below the mean of forty pages. In fact, 5%

of the teachers require fewer than twenty pages and 15% of the teachers require more than sixty pages of writing per semester. This finding suggests among other things that any effective methodology for evaluating writing programs will have to take this variation into account.

This variability in the amount of writing required by writing teachers was determined for teachers of equivalent courses from different institutions. We have no evidence regarding how much variation exists among different sections of the same course within individual institutions. However, if the variability is even close to that for equivalent courses across institutions, then, indeed, the amount of writing done in writing courses may be crucial way of characterizing them.

We did not try to find out to what extent the teachers who responded to our survey were free to choose the amount of writing they wanted their students to do. We did, however, ask the more general question of whether they were required to follow an approved departmental syllabus for the courses they teach. As reported in chapter II (II. 5.), only about forty percent of the teachers responding to our survey were required to follow a syllabus for freshman level writing courses and only fifteen percent were required to follow a syllabus for upper division courses. One might infer from this that most programs do not control how much writing their teachers require. If so, it might partially explain the amount of variability described above.

Kinds of Writing. The results of our inquiry into the types or kinds of writing teachers require of students is reported in chapter III (III. 3.). Again the major finding is variety. Teachers seem most often to require what we identify as "persuasive and informative uses" of writing, but a substantial amount of writing is also required for "personal and expressive uses," "mechanical uses," and "creative uses." There are some small differences in the relative emphases teachers from different institutional types place on these uses, but the general goal in writing classes seems to be to cover all bases and work on giving students some proficiency in most of the different areas. Only the creative uses of writing are relatively neglected.

Evaluation of Student Writing. Besides being concerned with the amount and kinds of writing students do, we wanted to find out how teachers evaluate that writing. Our approach was to ask teachers to rate certain aspects or qualities of written texts on a scale which indicated how much or how little those aspects of a text, or cues, influenced their evaluation of student writing. The items or cues that the teachers were asked to respond to cover a wide range of text features, from grammatical errors and sentence structure to originality and humor. Our findings are presented in Chapter IV.

As was the case with virtually all the responses to our survey, this question on the influence of certain cues on teachers' evaluation of student writing elicited a variety of responses. Different teachers had different ideas about the relative importance of such things as grammar, paragraph organization, logical reasoning, and other features of student texts. At the same time, the diversity in ranking the given evaluation cues was not as great as the diversity in responses to other questions, for example, in the response to how much writing is required. A kind of pattern does, however, emerge from

the responses which indicates something of a consensus in what teachers think is most important when they evaluate student writing. The existence of such a pattern may have important implications for writing program evaluators since what teachers decide is important in student writing determines, in a large part, the way they implement course curriculum and goals.

The four cues most consistently considered important by the teachers were:

1. support for major ideas,
2. coherence,
3. grammatical errors which inhibit comprehension, and
4. paragraph organization or structure.

There was a surprising amount of agreement about the importance of these cues. Considering some of the other findings summarized earlier in this chapter, this finding of a near consensus is interesting. Teachers require different amounts of writing and they require different types of writing from their students, but they generally agree about the bases for evaluating this diverse writing.

Instructional Activities. With regard to what actually happens in the classroom, we divided our considerations of teaching into instruction and curriculum; that is, we considered both how writing teachers teach and what they teach. As we reported in chapter III (III. 5.), about a fourth of instructional time is devoted to large-group discussions, about fifteen percent to lectures, and ten percent each to in-class essay writing, small group discussions, individual tutoring, and out-of-class conferencing. The remaining time is divided among a variety of different activities. This relative ranking of instructional activities is maintained fairly consistently across different institutional types. These findings may suggest the need to develop specific procedures and materials for use in writing program evaluation.

Curriculum. As opposed to instuctional activities which focused on the method by which instruction was performed, curriculum emphasizes content. Our results, which are reported in chapter III (III. 4.), seem to indicate that all writing courses--remedial/developmental, freshman, and non freshman--try to teach similar paragraph-level, essay-level, and revision skills. Among those aspects of curriculum mentioned most consistently and ranking in the top ten for all three types of courses are the following:

1. discussing methods of revising/editing,
2. doing revising/editing of student papers,
3. discussing essay organization,

4. discussing topic/thesis statements,

5. discussing essay development,

6. discussing paragraph development, and

7. discussing paragraph organization.

The teachers of remedial/developmental courses placed their primary emphasis on sentence and paragraph level skills and only a secondary emphasis on revision. In nonremedial/nondevelopmental freshman writing courses the emphasis is almost equally on paragraph level skills and revision, while in the non freshman writing courses, even more attention is paid to revision. This seems to indicate that teachers focus on increasingly more sophisticated aspects of curriculum as one moves from remedial/developmental to regular freshman to nonfreshman writing courses. These curricular aspects probably represent major goals of writing courses and programs, goals with must influence the kinds of procedures used in the evaluation of college writing programs.

As the immediately preceding discussion shows, a good portion of classroom time is spent discussing paragraph and essay level skills—particularly organization and development--discussing revision, and practicing revision and peer-editing. These seem to be the classroom activities most important in the teaching of writing at the college level.

The Most Successful Aspects of Teaching. In breaking teaching down into isolated components and in asking specific questions about curriculum or instruction, a researcher runs the risk of asking the wrong questions or getting an unbalanced picture of the whole from an overemphasis on certain parts. For that reason we also asked the responding teachers to write discursively about the most successful aspects of their teaching. In many ways the teachers responses to this open-ended question complement their earlier answers to the more detailed and quantitative questions about their teaching, thus suggesting that the their responses to the earlier "objective" questions were valid ones.

For example, the heavy emphasis on revision that was evident in the curricular activities teachers said they practiced is also apparent here. "Teaching revision" was named the second most successful aspect of the teaching of writing by all teachers, and "peer editing" was identified as the third most successful aspect of teaching. This compares very closely with the responses to the question on curricular activities in which "doing revision" and "doing peer-editing" ranked first and second, respectively. That revision and peer-editing show up so consistently in these two different types of questions emphasizes how important they are to the teachers responding to our survey. That the curricular activities most frequently practiced turned up as among the most successful aspects of teaching suggests that the teachers who responded to our survey generally consider their teaching of writing to be successful.

"Conferencing," which teachers across the board identified as the very

most successful aspect of teaching, did not turn up in the section on curricular activities. This is not surprising since the section on curricular activities focused solely on instuction that takes place in the classroom. It is interesting, however, that an activity that does not take place in the classroom, that requires extra work from the instructor, and that occupies only a relatively small amount of the instructor's teaching time is considered the most effective in teaching students how to write. The implications of this finding warrant more study.

The responses teachers gave to our questions, whether the "objective" ones or the discursive ones, suggest some important directions for research on the evaluation of college and university writing programs. In the present summary chapter, we have indicated what some of these directions might be. From our attempts to arrive at good descriptions of writing programs, both in the present report and in our other reports of national surveys, we have come to believe that any attempt to evaluate a writing program must attend to at least the following issues:

1. the processes of writing,
2. the processes of writing instruction,
3. the evaluation of student writing,
4. the writing program as part of a larger institutional context,
5. the function of the writing program in its particular social and cultural context, and
6. the meaning of the term writing in our culture.

The last three issues are particularly important ones, partly because they are usually ignored in writing program evaluations and partly because it is ultimately our understanding of those issues which determines whether the teaching of composition is a worthwhile activity, and, if it is worthwhile, whether it is successful. Unless our writing programs answer the needs of the culture they are presumably designed to serve, they can hardly be seen as worthwhile. If we believe the teaching of writing to be valuable within our culture, then we must address the cultural relevance of writing programs in our evaluations of them.

NOTES

[1]Stephen P. Witte, Paul R. Meyer, Thomas P. Miller, and Lesser Faigley, A National Survey of College and University Writing Program Directors, FIPSE Grant No. G008005896 Technical Report No. 2 (Austin: The University of Texas at Austin, Writing Program Assessment Office, 1981).

[2]Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of Writing in College (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963).

[3]Options for the Teaching of English (New York: Modern Language Association, 1975).

[4]Options for the Teaching of English: Freshman Composition (New York: Modern Language Association, 1978).

[5]"Business as Usual: Write, Write, Write," The CEA Forum (October, 1978), pp. 3-9. We would also like to thank several of our colleagues for their help during various stages of the survey reported here. Lester L. Faigley, James L. Kinneavy, Anna Skinner, and Chris Bovey (former project secretary) made substantial contributions to the development of the survey instrument itself. Chris Bovey, Janice Sturrock, and Clare Alesch either assisted in sending out questionnaires or in keeping track of them when they were returned. We are extremely grateful to Roger D. Cherry who took time away from his other work to read an earlier draft of the present report and to suggest ways of presenting the information more clearly. Rebecca Francis, our current project secretary, has aided us in numerous ways: coding data, constructing tables, chasing down computer printouts, and generally reducing the number of obstacles we have had to overcome in bringing this project to completion. Her contributions were both direct and indirect, both large and small, but always appreciated.

[6]The results of the survey of writing program directors appear in Witte, Meyer, Miller, and Faigley, A National Survey of College and University Writing Program Directors.

[7]The information about the sources of funding for the institutions whose teachers responded to the present survey is based on the following documents: David B. Biesel, et al., eds. The College Blue Book: Narrative Description, 17th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1979); Susan F. Watts and Joan Hunter, eds., Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study, 1980 Edition (Princeton, NJ: Peterson's Guides, 1979); James Cass and Max Birnbaum, Comparative Guide to American Colleges, 9th ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); and Maureen Matheson, ed., The College Handbook: 1980-81 (New York: College Examination Board, 1980).

[8]See Education Directory: Colleges and Universities, 1978-1979 (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1980). Our classifying schools as either four-year institutions or universities is based on the descriptions of those schools found in the various documents listed in Note 7. The way we have classified the schools whose teachers responded to our questionnaire differs from the way Gibson, "Business as Usual," classified his. To judge by the number of universities (229) cited by Gibson, it would

appear that school names ("university," "college," "junior college") alone determined membership in his classes.

[9]These categories are adapted from those employed by NCES; see in particular, W. Vance Grant and Leo J. Eiden, Digest of Education Statistics (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1980).

[10]The figures in this column are derived from A National Survey of College and University Writing Program Directors, pp. 32-37.

[11]See A National Survey of College and University Writing Program Directors, pp. 104-105.

[12]See A National Survey of College and University Writing Program Directors, pp. 43-54.

[13]Arthur N. Applebee, Writing in the Secondary School: English and the Content Areas, NCTE Research Report no. 21 (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981), esp. pp. 27-58.

APPENDIX:

A LISTING OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Anna Maria College
Asnuntock Comm. College
Auburn University
Augsburg College
Beaver College
Brigham Young University
California State--Dominguez Hills
Carnegie Mellon University
Central Connecticut State College
City University of New York--
Queens College
Clarke College
College of Mount St. Vincent
College of St. Catherine
College of St. Francis
College of William and Mary
Cook-Douglass College
Dean Jr. College
Delta College
Drexel University
East Central Oklahoma State
University
Eastern Michigan University
Edison Community College
El Centro College
Ferrum College
Franklin and Marshall College
Frostburg State College
Gannon University
Hofstra University
Hunter College
Indiana State University--Evansville
Indiana University
Jefferson Community College
Kansas State University
Lake Forest College
Lenoir-Rhyne College
Lewis and Clarke Community College
Los Angeles Trade & Technological College
Louisiana State University
Loyola Marymount University
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Miami University (Ohio)
Michigan Technological University
Monroe Community College
Murray State College

NYC Technical College
Nicholls State University
Northwest Nazarene College
Ohio Dominican College
Ohio University
Ohio Wesleyan University
Oklahoma State University
Pennsylvania State--Behrend College
Pepperdine University
Phillips County Community College
Polytechnic Institute of New York
Princeton University
Principia College
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rutgers University
St. Edward's University
St. Paul's College
St. Peter's College
St. Thomas University
San Francisco State University
Southwestern Oklahoma State University
Spokane Falls Community College
State University of New York at Oneonta
Texas Christian University
Texas Tech University
Tougaloo College
Tulane University
United States Air Force Academy
United States Military Academy
University of Alabama
University of California--Los Angeles
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado
University of Georgia
University of Hartford
University of Illinois
University of Iowa
University of Kentucky
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota--Duluth
University of Missouri
University of Nebraska
University of Nevada--Las Vegas
University of New Mexico
University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill
University of North Carolina--Wilmington
University of Pittsburgh
University of Southern California
University of South Alabama
University of South Florida
University of Southern Mississippi
University of Tampa
University of Virginia
University of Washington

University of Wisconsin
Upsala College
Virginia Tech
Walla Walla College
West Liberty State College
Wichita State University
William Patterson College
Youngstown State University